

2017 ALAMEDA COUNTY**Child Care and Early Education Crisis**

Fact Sheet

The Problem:

Children, families and early educators in Alameda County are facing a crisis.

Limited access to quality, affordable child care and early education is taking its toll on families, educators, and communities across our county. Parents can't find child care that they can afford. Early educators' pay is so low that it's impossible to provide the basics for their own families. Children can't get the early learning they need to be ready for kindergarten.

Research shows that **a child's brain develops most dramatically during the first five years of life.** This critical period is a window of opportunity to lay the foundation for all of the years that follow. Yet thousands of Alameda County children are missing out. They need access to quality early educators and child care programs that will give them the very best start in life during this critical period of their development.

The Need Is Great:

- ✓ **Affordable child care is out of reach.** The average cost of child care for middle-class families in Alameda County is almost a quarter of family income. For many, these are exorbitant costs comparable to funding a college education, with little assistance from employers or others. Many parents are forced to work two jobs, leave the workforce entirely, or depend on poor quality child care because that's all that they can afford.
- ✓ **Children in homeless families can't get access.** The growing homeless population in Alameda County includes hundreds of children that can't get access to quality child care services.
- ✓ **Early educators are in poverty.** Early educators' pay has not kept up with the rising cost of living. The average Alameda County child care center worker salary is \$29,000 per year, hardly enough to make ends meet for child care workers and their families.
- ✓ **Access to care is limited.** More than 115,000 Alameda County children lack access to formal child care and early education. Only 31% of Alameda County children with working parents have a licensed child care and early education space available to them.
- ✓ **Thousands arrive NOT ready for kindergarten.** Fifty-six percent (56%) of Alameda County children are not fully prepared to start kindergarten when they arrive, and 20% of those are not even partially ready.



Thousands of Alameda County children are on waiting lists for subsidized child care and early education.

Alameda County Child Care and Early Education—Fast Facts:

- ✓ This crisis disproportionately affects low-income women of color. The child care workforce is almost exclusively female, with a large number of older women, women of color, recent immigrants, and first-generation college students and mothers.
- ✓ Poor compensation of early educators drives turnover and hampers the ability to attract and retain skilled educators. This in turn undermines stable, continuous relationships essential to young children.
- ✓ Seventy-five percent (75%) of Alameda County child care workers and early educators worry about paying monthly bills and fifty-four percent (54%) worry about putting food on their tables.

The Solution:

A Countywide Local Revenue Measure

WHAT is it?

A local sales tax measure on the June 2018 ballot.

Pending County Board of Supervisors action to place a measure on the ballot, as well as voter approval of the measure, up to \$140 million would be generated annually to:

- ✓ Provide child care and early education options for homeless families and children, and those who need it most.
- ✓ For families of thousands of children on waiting lists throughout the County, increase access to affordable, quality child care and early education.
- ✓ Raise early educator pay to \$15 per hour for participating providers.
- ✓ Attract and retain quality child care and early education providers.
- ✓ Increase programs that support child care providers and increase the quality of child care and early education.

WHO drives the process?

- ✓ **The Alameda County Board of Supervisors** is responsible for studying the crisis, developing policy solutions (including a local ballot measure) with robust community input, overseeing ballot measure preparation, and calling for an election.
- ✓ **An Independent Campaign Committee**, fueled with private funding, mobilizes early interest and support, and mounts a "YES campaign" (once the measure is on the ballot) to educate voters, build support and win the election.
- ✓ **Alameda County Voters** will decide the fate of the measure when they VOTE.

Q: Has something like this ever been attempted?

A: YES! In 2004, 2014, and 2016 Alameda County voters overwhelmingly approved healthcare, transportation, and affordable housing revenue measures with over 70% support.



Return on Investment:

Studies have shown that investing in quality early education yields a high return on investment of up to 13%. This means that new local investment could yield returns of \$819 million annually or \$8.2 billion over 10 years.

Current Status: (October 2017)

- ✓ Early support has been encouraging. All five members of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors have expressed interest and support.
- ✓ **Early voter research results are promising.** Additional polling will be conducted in December 2017.
- ✓ A County-sponsored "Steering Committee" has been established with participation from community members, to study effective policy solutions and costs, and draft an Expenditure Plan proposal that would be included in a 2018 ballot measure package.
- ✓ An extensive **Early Care and Education Listening Initiative** is planned for Fall 2017.
- ✓ The Board of Supervisors will weigh in, consider options, oversee the ballot measure preparation process, and vote yes or no to place a measure on the ballot in 2018.
- ✓ An independent Campaign Committee has been formed to begin raising resources and attracting EARLY support.



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This Fact Sheet has been prepared to share information about this evolving initiative with interested parties. All information listed here is subject to change. NO final decisions have been made and none are expected until after the 2018 New Year.