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February 5, 2013

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Proposed 2013-14 Budget and Early Care and Education

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council I am writing to thank you for not proposing significant cuts to early care and education (ECE) in your 2013-2014 budget. Abundant research shows that quality early care and education is increasingly recognized as a precursor to academic success and is a sound investment of public dollars with many multiplier effects. The ECE field strongly supported Proposition 30 even though ECE derived no direct benefit from its passage because we understand we are an integral part of the education continuum.

Over the last four years, more than \$1 billion has been reduced from California ECE programs. Early care and education provides working families with the ability to seek and maintain employment while ALSO allowing children to benefit from quality learning opportunities. In Alameda County, as a result of the \$130 million cut to the ECE budget last year, more than 900 children have no access to care, jeopardizing their families' economic prosperity.

Alameda County representatives are well-positioned to serve on the Department of Social Services workgroup help streamline the ECE system. Since 2011 we have been proactively developing suggested no-cost proposals for administrative efficiencies. We have attached those 16 proposals for your review.

We remain concerned that a shift of ECE funding and administration from the Department of Education to local County Welfare Departments would lead to the dismantling of Title V programs, giving local governments less flexibility and funding to provide quality ECE to residents. The few states that administer ECE at the County level cite numerous shortcomings. In fact, some states like Michigan are moving in the reverse direction and moving ECE funding back to the state education agency.

The Governor had sought to save state money by eliminating and to more closely align child care services with families' needs by moving subsidized child care administration from the Department of Education to the Department of Social Services and county welfare departments. States with locally administered subsidized child care also wanted like you to eliminate administrative inefficiencies, but these supposed benefits were rarely borne out in reality.



Inequity in service is the most common problem resulting from local administration. When counties are given the autonomy to set child care policy and administer child care, the kinds of services offered—and who is eligible for them—can vary widely from county to county.

- In New York, where counties have a significant amount of control over how subsidized child care is administered, parental copayments in different counties can range from 10% to 35% of income over poverty.ⁱ
- Colorado allows its counties to determine income eligibility; 57% of families who were denied subsidized child care through the county-administered state child care program would have been eligible for the same care in a neighboring county.ⁱⁱ

Inequity is also a problem for child care providers where reimbursement rates are determined locally, as is the case in Colorado, Texas, New York and Florida. Locally determined reimbursement rates lead to providers concentrating in counties where rates are high and with fewer providers in counties where rates are low.

Finding the balance between state-imposed safeguards and local flexibility is the perennial challenge. Because local administrative bodies are still subject to state regulations, it is unclear how much they are able to truly tailor the programs they provide to the needs of their constituencies. In Colorado, and several other states, the allocation formulas that the state used to determine local funding did not take unique regional factors into account, resulting in counties consistently over- or under-spending their allocations.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Planning Council is the only centralized local planning structure that is accountable to the public and the Board of Supervisors, County Office of Education, and State Department of Education. We are hopeful we can move forward this year and partner with the state on improving administrative efficiencies and work towards a more fully funded system in the future.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Angie Garling, Council Coordinator at (510) 208-9675.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Acosta Crocker, Council Chair

Cc: Members and Consultants of the Senate Budget Committees
Members and Consultants of the Assembly Budget Committees
Alameda County Legislative Delegation

ⁱ Akhtar, Saima and Susan Antos. Mending the Patchwork: A Report Examining County-by-County Inequities in Child Care Subsidy Administration in New York State. Empire Justice Center. Jan 2010.

ⁱⁱ Report of the State Auditor: Colorado Care Assistance Program. Department of Human Services. Nov 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ Report of the State Auditor: Colorado Care Assistance Program.