



January 31, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Alameda County Early Care and Education (ECE) Planning Council is a state mandated advisory body consisting of 25 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the County Superintendent of Schools. We thank you for your unprecedented leadership to invest billions of dollars in California's young children and for the attention and commitment you have given to early childhood systems and services.

Alameda County is a national leader in recognizing the critical nature of ECE and child and family health. In March 2020, voters will be able to support a half percent sales tax (**Care for Kids**) which will generate \$150 million annually to help prevent the current 30-40% turnover of ECE staff, and increase ECE access for families and needed services at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. A similar Measure (A) in 2018 failed by less than half of one percent.

As the County Council addressing local, state, and federal ECE policy and bolstered by your historically significant proposal of an Early Childhood Master Plan, we are examining the *Blue Ribbon Commission* report and your proposed budget in order to ensure that we can maximize funds and improve service delivery. We look forward to engaging in dialogue with you on the points described below and on any other topics related to our children, families, and ECE staff.

Priority ECE Items for Alameda County ECE Planning Council Not Addressed in Proposed 2021 Budget

1. We urge you to implement rate reform and increases as soon as possible. ECE has been underfunded for over 30 years, and annually loses 30-40% of its knowledgeable teachers, providers, and leaders due to low wages. For example, our ECE Planning Council staff recently conducted a local 3 hour "point in time data" search and found 57 open Alameda County ECE teacher positions. These are the professionals needed to help design and operationalize a successful ECE Master Plan. Without assurance of an annual increased subsidy rate, the on-going staff shortage and reduced program resources will result in poor quality services for the intended beneficiaries of the Master Plan: low income working and student families, children with special needs, and other at-risk families including those without permanent shelter.
2. A key priority is stabilizing the CDE Alameda County Subsidy Pilot Program. This highly successful pilot increased services in Alameda County in 2017 – 2018 for an additional 1,800 children with \$5 million in funds that otherwise would have gone unused for eligible families. Our Pilot expires July 1, 2021 and needs to be moved to permanent status, similar to that previously obtained by San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. The Program requires no additional State funding and is, with CDE assistance, developing and incubating policy innovations to eliminate barriers for eligible families.

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- Ana Del Aguila
- Briana Brown
- Darlene Johnston
- Diana Buffington
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3. Desperately needed is a statewide ECE subsidy program for unhoused families modeled on the Emergency Foster Care Bridge as outlined in the *Blue Ribbon* recommendations. With limited one time local funding Alameda County has seeded this effort, proving that the model is effective and services are in high demand. One of the mothers assisted by the program was able to obtain family child care through this program, vs. placing her two children alone in a car at night while she worked as a custodian at Amtrak. Our county, as many others, has a burgeoning homeless family population.

Quality, Workforce, Supportive Services in Budget

4. We are very appreciative with the Budget's proposed facility resources and broadened and increased funding streams to serve low income and special needs populations. We hope that the earmarked \$300 million for school based facilities is made available to community based organizations operating on school sites as well.

\$8.5 million for New Department of Early Childhood Development

Alameda County ECE programs have striven to develop a unified system through careful planning and cooperative programming. We know from experience that a new Master Plan could be of great assistance in those efforts. However, we have questions about the intent and scope of the proposed Department of Early Childhood Development. In our opinion, it is moving too quickly and there could be unintended negative impacts on children and families. Some of our concerns are listed below.

5. After years of research distilling the evidence that **quality** ECE is critical to healthy child development and better educational outcomes, we question the distancing of early learning programs from our state education infrastructure. Quality services require cross discipline collaboration; just as in K- 12 schools, it is important to integrate health, social services, and family support as vital functions in ECE. Quality also demands professionally educated staff, who are appropriately compensated and respected for their work. The proposal to separate ECE services from Education weakens that intent and could create a route to increased custodial care with few quality level regulations and poorly paid staff.
6. Local program administration costs will increase with the new Department of Early Childhood Development by expanding fiscal and program reporting. Of Alameda County's roughly \$115 million in state ECE funding almost \$43 million is for State Preschool through 36 state contracting agencies. Forty two percent (42%) of those agencies have additional ECE state contracts. They would be required to report to two administering agencies rather than one. Seven of our contractors would have a new state administrator.
7. We also look forward to you addressing the Department and Master Plan's interface with Local Planning Councils, First 5 agencies, Community Care Licensing, and other state and local administrative and supportive institutions. For example, Local Planning Councils provide the real time feedback loop between federal, state and local policy makers and our local mixed delivery system. City, county, and regional agencies (including higher education) have established communication and collaboration within the current system. Are these institutions and networks being included in the Master Plan structure?

We also respectfully request that you consider opportunities to integrate ECE with the New Department of Better Jobs and Wages. Thank you again for your leadership and partnership and we look forward to ongoing discussions.

Sincerely,



Melanie Mueller
Chair

CC:
Alameda County Legislative Delegation
Assembly and Senate Budget Committee Staff
Alameda County CAO Staff