



C O U N T Y A D M I N I S T R A T O R

SUSAN S. MURANISHI
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

July 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Member, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Alameda County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Program

Dear Senator Skinner:

The Alameda County child care field, like the national child care field, is in a time of great uncertainty due to the impact of COVID-19. While the Governor, K-12 educators, and their labor representatives are moving to distance learning to protect children and staff, many child care programs are continuing to operate out of financial necessity or obligation to the children and families who may have no other options due to their employment needs.

We appreciate all of your efforts to find a mechanism to sustain the Alameda County Subsidized Pilot which is scheduled to sunset in one year. Removal of the sunset of July 1, 2021, from the Alameda County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Program would follow the precedent of San Francisco and San Mateo counties which have made their pilots permanent via prior and similar Budget Act requests with no impact to state funding. Data from 2017-2018 show that the pilot enabled Alameda County to retain an estimated \$5 million in already budgeted state funds and serve an estimated 2,000 additional children. More than 30 state contracting agencies participated serving more than 12,000 children.

The Alameda County Child Care Emergency Response team has planned for the County child care infrastructure, convening three County agencies and the County Office of Education, three resource and referral agencies, and First 5 in daily planning meetings for over four months. They created a central intake system for essential workers and shared data dashboard, shaped state funding to meet the County's needs, convened listening sessions and webinars for over one thousand Alameda County child care programs with health and regulatory experts including California Community Care Licensing, and forged new partnerships with mental health consultants and public health nurses through the Samuel Merritt University. They estimate that currently only 35% of centers and 47% of family child care homes are open.

The current COVID-19 crisis has intensified the need for this pilot to be made permanent. Prior to the pandemic, Alameda County child care contractors needed pilot-created features just to remain operational. These pilot-authorized contract modifications will remain paramount for anticipated years of economic recovery. Further, Alameda County faces higher Cost of Living and ranks in the top ten California counties for number of COVID-19 cases. The COVID crisis solidified recognition that early care and education (ECE) programs are the backbone of our economy, education, and health care systems as schools and non-essential businesses closed.

Removal of the pilot sunset would help the child care field with COVID response and recovery through these specific supportive features which require no additional budget allocations:

- The rolling opportunity to conduct Voluntary Temporary Transfers – which may be needed among the County’s five Alternate Payment voucher agencies to match essential worker geographic and program needs, as well as adjust center-based contract allocations on an ongoing basis.
- The ability to raise contractor reimbursement rates to mitigate the County’s high cost of living and enable contractors to attract staff (more difficult to attract and or/retain during and after COVID) among other key expenses.
- Expanded eligibility timeframes which provide more stability for children (who have had to undergo extreme disruption due to COVID) and reduced administrative burdens for many administrators who may have had to continue operations and caring for groups of children in a highly stressful health pandemic.
- The ongoing ability to innovate and drive state policy change in a “controlled experiment” – obtaining flexibility in specified areas with approval from the California Department of Education staff.

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors has adopted a strategic plan for the next decade – Vision 2026. Vision 2026 has four shared visions including “Thriving & Resilient Population,” “Prosperous & Vibrant Economy,” and “Healthy Environment,” which this pilot program addresses by supporting children and families, family ability to work, and creating safe and nurturing community spaces. This pilot program also advances Alameda County’s Vision 2026 10X Goals of Eliminating Poverty & Hunger and Employment for All. Alameda County needs the pilot to be made permanent to retain and shore up our child care infrastructure so that the economy can restart and programs can continue to support children’s school readiness. For these reasons, Alameda County is proud to support this pilot program.

We hope that you will join us in sustaining this no budget cost and key policy for low-income children and families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Keith Carson
Vice President, Board of Supervisors, District 5
Chair, Personnel, Administration and
Legislation (PAL) Committee

cc: Members, Alameda County Board of Supervisors
Political Solutions