



December 5, 2018

The Honorable Wilma Chan  
President, Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
1221 Oak Street, #536  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Supervisor Chan:

For the past year, with seed funding from your office, the Alameda County Early Care and Education (ECE) Planning Council, Parent Voices, BANANAS, Family Front Door, First 5 Alameda County, and the Alameda County Social Services Agency have been collaborating to develop a pilot program (CARE) to provide Oakland children in families experiencing homelessness with child care access and navigation to existing public child care subsidies with backup emergency vouchers. Our involvement in this effort provided us with insight into the plight of families and pregnant women swept up in the growing tide of housing instability across Oakland and the entire County of Alameda. **We are requesting the City of Oakland and the County of Alameda increase housing services for homeless pregnant women and families with young children and end unsheltered homeless families as soon as possible.**

While the last homeless point in time (PIT) count only showed 270 families unsheltered with 711 members, the homeless management information system showed **969 families with 2,917 members as homeless in Alameda County**. An estimated 25% of the County's home visiting clients are experiencing homelessness, and currently there is one pregnant woman on the Family Front Door caseload and three waiting for case management. These numbers do not reflect the true extent of the issue as many families do not come forward to ask for assistance out of fear and live in their vehicles or with friends instead.

Pregnant women, and families with young children are particularly at risk when they face housing instability. For example, 1 in 5 pregnant women who are homeless give birth prematurely, according to research findings cited in the [UCSF report](#). **Currently in our county and in the City of Oakland, families with newborns cannot leave the hospital without a car seat but they can leave without a home.**

Locally, there are dozens of compelling stories that we are hearing as we develop the CARE program. For instance:

- Last winter, **two infants of mothers experiencing homelessness reportedly died**—one on BART in a stroller with the family's belongings.
- CARE recently supported overnight child care access for a woman who was **leaving her two school age children to sleep alone in a car overnight** because she could not leave them unattended in a shelter while she worked nights at Amtrak.
- The challenge of family homelessness goes unrecognized or appreciated. The emphasized part of news stories regarding the Oakland police officer who revived a newborn two weeks ago was his heroism, not **the tragedy of having a homeless mother delivering by herself, in her car.**

We know that being homeless will have a permanent, damaging impact on the development of children in Oakland and throughout the County of Alameda and that is why we are calling on you to take additional steps to ensure their safety. We work closely with Family Front Door through the CARE program and they

are providing exemplary services to families. **However, we request you provide additional resources for pregnant women and families with children experiencing homelessness in current and future funding and planning.** Our proposals for your consideration include:

#### Short Term

- Open at least **one warming shelter** specifically for pregnant women and families with children this winter or provide access to emergency motel vouchers they can use during inclement weather.
- Have the coordinated entry system provide **pregnant women** and families of young children 0-5 at coordinated points of entry (eg: Family Front Door in Oakland) **immediate access to housing options suitable to their situation.** If none are available, provide them with emergency motel vouchers and create a long term plan for permanent housing.

#### Long Term

- **Sustain and increase funding for programs such as CARE** that provide child care navigation and emergency child care vouchers for children in families experiencing homelessness and expand them beyond Oakland.
- We encourage you to ensure there are **suitable options for families with young children included in funding future shelters and affordable housing projects.**
- Family Front Door is a model that works in the north county region but **additional funding for more case managers is needed** to decrease the size of the waiting list.

In October, we met with Mayor Schaaf's staff and there was a commitment to considering funding for some of the programs listed above in the next city budget cycle. We hope this commitment remains strong. There has also been demonstrated support for more programs for homeless families from Assemblyman Rob Bonta and Senator Nancy Skinner. **We believe by working in partnership we can end the unsheltered homelessness crisis in Oakland and Alameda County and provide more long term housing solutions for families in the future.** If you have questions in regard to this letter, please contact Ellen Dektar at 510-208-9578, Clarissa Doutherd at 510-866-6489, or Page Tomblin at 510-227-6982.

Sincerely,

<i>Clarissa Doutherd</i>	<i>Angie Garling</i>	<i>Priya Jagannathan</i>	<i>Kym Johnson</i>	<i>Kristin Spanos</i>
Parent Voices	Alameda County ECE Program	Oakland Starting Smart and Strong	BANANAS	First 5 Alameda

Cc:

Members, Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
Mayor Libby Schaaf, City of Oakland  
Members, City of Oakland City Council  
Sara Bedford, City of Oakland  
Lori Cox, Alameda County Social Services Agency  
Elaine de Coligny, Every One Home  
Joe DeVries, City of Oakland  
Linda Gardner, Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department  
Laura Guzman, Every One Home  
Willie A. Hopkins, Jr., Alameda County General Services Agency  
Kiko Malin, Alameda County Department of Public Health