



April 1, 2022

Dear Members of the California Child Care Rate and Quality Stakeholder Workgroup,

We are grateful for your leadership in support of children, families, and communities. We are optimistic that, when resourced fully, the California Child Care Rate and Quality Stakeholder Workgroup recommendations will be a historic step towards building an equitable foundation for today's children and our country's future.

Our mission at Alameda County First 5 is to build a responsive early childhood system in support of young children and their families and caregivers. **In March 2020, Alameda County voters approved Measure C, the Children's Health and Child Care Initiative for Alameda County which names First 5 Alameda as the administrator of the Child Care, Preschool, and Early Education portion of the revenue estimated at \$150 M annually.** Measure C is a half-percent (0.5%) sales tax that would provide support and enhancements for child care, preschool, and early education and pediatric health care in Alameda County. Measure C is expected to provide access to high quality early care and education (ECE) for thousands of children and families across Alameda County and includes an increase in ECE workforce wages to \$15 per hour, as well as supports to improve ECE quality and teacher retention. While we will have local administrative flexibility for Measure C, this funding will rest on top of the early care and education administrative policies established at the state.

Given this, we are writing to record our support of the Stakeholder Workgroup's current approach and to emphasize our agreement with insights shared by workgroup members, such as:

- Dedicate funding to finance rates and cost-of-business increases year-over-year, regardless of the rate methodology. Failure to do so will result in underfunding similar to the existing RMR approach (Eric Sonnenberg and others),
- Prioritize compensation ahead of new or expanded education and training requirements. The current workforce is highly skilled and experienced, but poorly compensated. (Dr. Lea Austin and others),
- Resource certification and degree attainment at the higher education level and at the individual teacher level, once base compensation is addressed, for a comprehensive approach to the ECE mixed delivery system (Eric Peterson and others),
- Establish a policy that ensures rate increases result in increased wages for teachers (Graham Dobson and others).

The moment to invest in a better future through long-term, systemic solutions for children and families is now. We offer First 5 Alameda County as a partner and a resource in support of the system discussions by providing local data that supports the three core components of the vision outlined by your workgroup:

Vision One: Compensate all teachers and providers for the true cost of providing care by reimbursing programs at rates that reflect the economic diversity of California. First 5 Alameda encourages adoption of a rate strategy that ensures that increased reimbursement rates result in increased wages and compensation for providers. Measure C requires a minimum wage for providers, and we would be eager to partner in further thinking about financial structures that ensure increased wages for providers.

Alameda County Local Context

- 87% of Alameda County ECE professionals, most of whom are women of color, are considered very low-income for the County. 50% of ECE professionals earn \$18 or less per hour in Alameda County, roughly equivalent to \$39,280 per year in a county where a family of four must earn a \$137,660 annual income in order to cover their basic needs.
- Child care providers were hard hit by the pandemic. **We estimate that the Alameda County ECE field lost \$395 million in FY 2020-21 alone** (\$220 million without taking the increased cost of providing care into consideration) and continues to experience losses in the current fiscal year.
- Alameda County is excited to share and leverage the thinking of the recent [Final Report of the Early Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force](#), which includes detailed recommendations about how to implement a statewide, publicly funded permanent early educator compensation program available to all licensed early learning programs, full-stop.

Vision Two: Recognize the costs of meeting varying quality standards and regulations. **Quality cannot happen without financial resources and benefits to support and retain the workforce.** Providers should be resourced equitably and proactively in the pursuit of their identified continuous quality improvement goals as opposed to traditional tiered reimbursement methodologies that perpetuate and advance systemic inequities.

Alameda County Local Context

- In Alameda County, we are considering what it takes to move toward quality standards and strategies that center equity as well as anti-bias and anti-racist practice and examine the working conditions for ECE professionals. This also means meaningful parent/family engagement.

Vision Three: Strengthen the ability of the state's mixed delivery system to provide quality early learning options. **Quality supports must infuse resources up-front, rather than the current approach of rewards for those who meet a "quality rating".** Quality supports, such as coaching, development of quality improvement plans, and training are critical supports which should be made available to all providers, with particular focus on providers enrolling subsidized children.

Alameda County Local Context

- Over [48,000 children 0-5 in Alameda County live below 85%](#) of the state median income, a rough estimate for eligibility for subsidized child care.
- [17,604 children utilized subsidized child care](#) in Alameda County in 2018, the majority of whom were ages 3-5.
- In Alameda County, there is a significant gap in access to subsidies for income-eligible families- with an [unmet need of 91% of eligible infants and 46% of eligible preschool children](#).
- In Alameda County, the average cost of child care is more than 40% of the average family's income. With most income-eligible families unable to access subsidies that would mitigate the true cost of care, any available care is unaffordable.

As a local administrator and partner who has a vested interest in the policies enacted we welcome the opportunity to provide data and share administrative and programmatic insights learned from our partners in the field. We are grateful for your continued leadership, collective thinking and articulated knowledge and approach to the policies you are assessing that result in crucial support to children, families, and communities. Given your

collective expertise we are optimistic that, when resourced fully, the California Child Care Rate and Quality Stakeholder Workgroup recommendations will be a historic step towards building an equitable foundation for today's children and our country's future. Looking forward to partnering with you.

Sincerely,



Kristin Spanos
Chief Executive Officer
First 5 Alameda County

CC:

Lea Austin, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
Deborah Corley-Marzett, Child Care Providers United SEIU 521
Virginia Early, California Department of Education
Mari Estrada, Consultant and University Faculty Member
Erin Gabel, California Department of Education
Lupe Jaime-Mileham, California Department of Social Services
Kim Johnson, California Department of Social Services
Deborah Reidy Kelch, First 5 Association
Robin Layton, Educational Enrichment Systems
Lucrece Lester, Child Care Providers United SEIU 521
Lily Marquez, Parent Voices San Francisco
Kim Nall, Tribal Child Care Association of California
Sarah Neville-Morgan, California Department of Education
Giannina Pérez, Office of the Governor
Eric Peterson, Bananas
Kris Perry, Health and Human Services and Office of the Governor
Karla Pleitez-Howell, California Department of Social Services
Stephen Propheter, California Department of Education
Donna Sneeringer, Child Care Resource Center
Eric Sonnenfeld, Tulare County Office of Education
Dean Tagawa, Los Angeles Unified School District
Jackie Thu-Huong Wong, First 5 California
Verlinda Walker, Child Care Providers United SEIU 521