



Early Childhood Policy Council Meeting Summary: February 3, 2021

Attendees: Amelia Soto, AnnLouise Bonnitto, Antoinette Jacobs, Carola Oliva-Olson, Chelsea Rau, Cheryl Polk, Cheryl Schroeder, Dean Tagawa, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Debra Ward, Donna Sneeringer, Janet Zamudio, Khydeeja Alam Javid, Kay Ruhstaller, Kim Johnson, Kris Perry, Lupe Jaime, Mary Ignatius, Mayra Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, Natali Gaxiola, Patricia Alexander, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Sarah Burtner, Scott Moore, Sarah Neville-Morgan, Sonia Jaramillo, Stephanie Myers, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Burke Harris)

- In her opening remarks, Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) Chair, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, welcomed the Council and members of the public to the first meeting of the year. She thanked the Council and the public for their dedication and support throughout 2020. In recognition that there will be future opportunities to touch on a number of topics related to early childhood, Chair Burke Harris explained that the focus of this meeting will be on the State's most immediate items, including the Governor's January Budget, the California Department of Education's (CDE) Child Care and Development Fund State Plan, and a quarterly update from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on the transition of child care programs.
- Chair Burke Harris announced her departure from her role as chair of the Council. Over the holiday break, Dr. Burke Harris was appointed as co-chair of the Community Vaccine Advisory Committee and chair of the California First 5 Commission. The two new appointments will require a great deal of time and will work to support and complement the work of the ECPC. Dr. Burke Harris thanked the Council for the honor of serving alongside them in the ECPC meetings and for using their voices to hold important conversations about the future of early childhood in California.
- To maximize the amount of time spent during the meeting, Chair Burke Harris informed the Council that she would forgo reading the roster aloud and that the ECPC support team would check attendance by referring to the names in the Zoom participant panel.



Early Childhood Policy Council

2. Early Childhood Policy Council Survey Results

- ECPC support team member Aressa Coley of WestEd presented an overview of results from the Council's end-of-year planning survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect feedback on Council meetings from the previous year and to gain insights into Council members' interests and priorities.
- Council members expressed interest in exploring topics related to COVID impact and recovery, taking a deeper dive into each of the Master Plan's goal areas, early childhood workforce professional development and technical assistance, and equity-driven strategies to support families and child care providers.

3. Governor's Proposed January Budget

- Giannina Perez, Senior Advisor to the Governor on early childhood, introduced the Governor's January Budget proposal agenda item. In her introductory remarks, Perez expressed her gratitude to the Council for the work they've conducted over the past year and their continued dedication to California's children, families, and child care providers. Perez provided an update on the Golden State stimulus that allocates more than \$2 billion for individuals who are able to access the California Earned Income Tax Credit (Cal EITC).
- Carlos Aguilera and Sara Burtner from the Department of Finance (DOF) presented an overview of the Governor's January Budget proposal, specifically focusing on funding proposals with implications to the State's early childhood system. The presentation summarized proposals for the current year and upcoming budget year.
- Current year proposals included \$110 million to child care providers to reimburse them for costs of waived family fees and extends the length of care for children of essential workers with temporary vouchers; an additional \$21.5 million for child care slots in 2020–21 and an additional \$44 million in ongoing funding to expand child care slots; and an update on the collective bargaining process with Child Care Providers United (CCPU).
- Budget year proposals included the transition of early childhood programs from CDE to CDSS effective July 1, 2021; Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act COVID Relief Funds; one-time General Fund allocations to support families and child care providers as a result of the pandemic; and guidance on how to prioritize \$300 million of additional federal funding.
- Aguilera and Burtner facilitated questions from and discussions within the Council.



Early Childhood Policy Council

4. Child Care and Development Fund State Plan

- Becky Halligan from the CDE presented an overview of California’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan. The three-year CCDF plan will go into effect on October 1, 2021. The CCDBG of 2014 reauthorization will protect the health and safety of children in child care, help parents make informed decisions to support child development, provide equitable access to childcare, and enhance quality. Key features of the CCDBG legislation are implemented in eight categories of the state plan. The plan will be available online for public comment and the CDE will conduct input sessions along with public hearings on the plan.
- Halligan posed a series of guiding questions to facilitate discussion with the Council and capture feedback to inform the final CCDF State Plan.

5. Child Care Program Transition Second Quarter Report

- CDSS Director, Kim Johnson, presented an overview of the Child Care Program Transition Second Quarter Report. Director Johnson summarized efforts CDSS has taken over the last quarter to engage stakeholders to inform development of the draft transition plan. While the official transfer will not take place until July 1, 2021, the transition plan is due to the legislature and the ECPC at the end of March.
- The CDSS transition team has engaged stakeholders continuously throughout the plan’s development, including opportunities through topical listening sessions, quarterly stakeholder calls, and feedback collected through the transition webpage. Upcoming activities to finalize the plan will include a release of the draft transition plan for public comment, public-private partnership development, a Transition Plan Walkthrough via webinar, the Third Quarter Stakeholder Call, and the transition of programs and staff on July 1, 2021.

A high-level, thematic summary of Council discussion and public comments received during the meeting can be found in the following pages.

Summary of Comments and Questions by ECPC Council Members and the Public

The following sections provide a high-level overview of themes from the February 3, 2021 ECPC meeting.

The ECPC is an advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, and Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning, care, and child development. It will provide recommendations on (1) all aspects of the state’s early childhood system, including



Early Childhood Policy Council

equity—with consideration for demographic, geographic, and economic diversity—focusing on family-centered, two-generation approaches; (2) opportunities to incorporate a support model of accountability—as opposed to a compliance model of accountability—into the state’s early childhood education system; and (3) ways that the State’s Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education’s (ECE) Final Report can be updated and improved.

The following is a list of the seven major themes from the meeting:

- Funding in relation to the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care’s implementation
- Supporting mixed-delivery systems
- Role of Institutions of Higher Education
- Addressing racial equity in the Master Plan and Governor’s Budget
- Increasing wages and reimbursement rates
- Stakeholder voices
- Financially assisting ECE providers

The following sections provide a high-level overview of these seven major themes.

Funding in relation to the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care’s implementation

Ensuring that sufficient funds are available to implement the Master Plan were top of mind for the Council and public attendees. Several attendees expressed concerns that the budget is not reflective of the needs of child care providers. Council members and the public described a high-need for clarity regarding hold harmless, as well as answers as to how the Governor’s Budget promotes parental choice.

Supporting mixed-delivery systems

Council comments about hold harmless and parental choice were also closely linked to comments related to mixed-delivery systems. Some Council members agreed with others who raised the importance of mixed-delivery systems addressing the needs of families. There were also statements from the public that underscored their understanding of the Master Plan in relation to transitional kindergarten (TK) and California State Public Preschool (CSPP) as well as questions about how changes to TK and CSPP in the plan contribute to equity.



Early Childhood Policy Council

Role of Institutions of Higher Education

Several comments from various members of the public cited the Master Plan and questioned the role that was being envisioned for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). The Council and public underscored the importance of partnerships with IHE and inquired about what partnerships would look like.

Addressing racial equity in the Master Plan and Governor's Budget

There were several comments from the Council and public that expressed a need for the Master Plan to be more intentional and clearer in outlining strategies that directly address systemic racism and the needs of children and families of color. Comments were also made about the need to propose more explicit solutions to increase wages for the workforce that address racial equity.

Increasing wages and reimbursement rates

Council members and the public called attention to the continued need to address ECE professionals' wages, often citing that it is a systemic problem that is linked to other areas of the system, such as programming, policies, and professional development. Increasing reimbursement rates and using projected rates were offered as areas that should be immediately addressed.

Stakeholder voices

Council members and the public underscored the need to include and listen to stakeholder voices, while also agreeing with statements that encouraged the broadening of strategies to involve more input from the community.

Financially assisting ECE providers

ECPC members expressed a strong sense of urgency in providing child care providers with financial assistance. Attendees highlighted the intensified strain providers are experiencing, particularly as resources and energy continue to be expended with the pandemic.



Early Childhood Policy Council

Select Quotes Supporting the Themes Identified Above

Funding in relation to the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care's implementation

- “How can we help ensure that there is sufficient funding to enable concrete progress to be made on implementation of the Master Plan?”
- “Additional funding across the ECE landscape is needed—a higher tide will raise all boats, however each segment of the ECE landscape has a different sized boat.”
- “How do we take into account various funding streams as well as ensuring for mixed-income diversity in our programs, as well as setting diversity.”
- “This budget ignores parental choice. When so much money is invested in TK and developing a P–12 system, it is ignoring existing programs and eliminating private providers that offer—in many cases—higher quality programs than LEAs. Parents need to be able to make the choice for their child that will best meet their needs and not be forced to enroll in a program only offered through an LEA.”

Supporting mixed-delivery systems

- “The mixed-delivery system we currently work through is imperative for the unique family needs throughout the state.”
- “My understanding of the Master Plan's description of Universal Preschool is promoting a mixed-delivery system, combining TK and CSPP into one state program, delivered through community-based programs, LEAs, and home-based educators—allowing for maximum parent choice. As part of this design, staff and home educators will be compensated justly according to their education and position, whether part of an LEA or community-based agencies.”
- “LEAs receive contracts and funding based on enrollment/attendance, much in the same way as other programs. Parents with income can afford to keep child in preschool/child development programs, while those in need—in order to receive child care—are forced into K–12 systems. How is this equitable? TKs need be a parental choice for all, regardless of income.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

Role of Institutions of Higher Education

- “In the absence of FIP [Faculty Initiative Project] and the Mentor Program, full collaboration with IHE ECE/CD [child development] programs is imperative to achieve a coordinated, articulated rollout. How else do you envision higher education’s active participation within the roll-out of this action item?”
- “Higher education is mentioned in Goal 2, Strategy A: Enhancing Educator Competencies. How do you envision higher education’s active participation within the roll-out of this action item and the Master Plan?”
- “Higher education is mentioned as a partner in Goal 1, Strategy C: Expanding Preschool Preparation. Higher education is eager to be involved. Higher education is a critical component of workforce preparation in California. As an Early Childhood/Child Development higher education faculty, we want to collaborate in the roll-out of this plan: contributing innovative and best practice models from ECE/CD higher education in California—in CCs [community colleges], CSUs [California State Universities], UCs [the University of California campuses], and private university campuses. How else do you envision higher education’s active participation within the roll-out of this action item?”

Addressing racial equity in the Master Plan and Governor’s Budget

- “Please include language that specifically identifies Tribes to be included in the Master Plan. Tribes are still isolated geographically and professionally when related to early education and child care.”
- “The lack of direction in serving our Black, Latinx, and Indigenous children and families; it is critical that we have an articulated plan along with the training and support needed for all early childhood professionals to address systemic racism.”
- “The staff at CDSS must be culturally and linguistically competent/sensitive so that they can guide/monitor the providers and programs that they will be responsible for; [they should be]...promoting and living the equity principles that CDSS has so eloquently shared in earlier meetings.”
- “I think everything that’s been discussed, both in terms of things that impact the providers and the families that the system serves—we’re talking about structural issues that relate to communities of color in California not having the resources that they need to fully participate in our economy and to succeed....But I know for me personally, when I first got the Master Plan, I’m looking for specific references to Black children and native children and Latinx children and plans to address their needs specifically. And moving forward, I think it’s important for our state plans to call out those needs and come up with specific plans to address them.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

- “The budget, while claiming to be steeped in equity, does not present true solutions to the racialized economic status of the workforce.”
- “The disparity in compensation between highly educated and qualified early childhood professionals and first-year credentialed educators in the TK–12 system is more than discouraging. We need to support the creation of a system in which early childhood permits are recognized as valid credentials and those holding them are honored, respected, and compensated in a more equitable way.”

Increasing wages and reimbursement rates

- “The sense of urgency needed for the workforce. The budget presents no new dollars or economic solutions for the workforce that are not inextricably linked to PD [professional development], credentialing, and training.”
- “Additionally, the budget, while claiming to be steeped in equity, does not present true solutions to the racialized economic status of the workforce.”
- “Systems change in early care and education starts with a livable wage.”
- “ECE, after-school, TK, K–12 are all experiencing teacher and staff shortages. COVID has exacerbated this shortfall. Wages, higher education opportunities, and recruitment into the field are all linked. We are missing critical voices, especially from higher education as we look at the workforce needs and supports required.”
- “We should be able to project out what market rates will be in the future...they do projections for all sorts of things, including setting the statutory COLA [Cost of Living Adjustment] for K–12.”
- “I’ll add that we cannot address the needs of children in isolation from families and in turn cannot address the needs of families in isolation from their communities. Programming and policies should be ecological and holistic... [and] respect and celebrate the cultural diversity of the families. The work must be customized and not a one-size-fits-all approach. As to the work group, it should really work to unpack the programming, policies, [and] professional development and really analyze this work in the context of issues of race, class, culture and language.”
- “I just wanted to echo what has been articulated so powerfully by so many about the need to increase reimbursement rates and wages for ECE professionals. It must be a top priority.”



Early Childhood Policy Council

Stakeholder voices

- “The budget falls extremely short of what our field needs and has ignored our voices.”
- “The voice of the workforce is a critical underpinning of the work. There are several aspects of the MPELC [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care] that drive inequities for the workforce. It is important to hear from them and imagine a plan and system that also emphasizes addressing the existing inequities for the workforce.”
- “Higher education faculty voice is critical in moving this plan forward.”
- “I’m very, very glad to see in the comments that have just been made about expanding the level of input from throughout the state, from very urban to our very rural communities.”
- “We conversate, we run the same crowd, but those conversations are only amongst a few. I think that door, that conversation needs to be open more so, to everyone, because there’s a lot of difference. You want to know why do private pay providers want to take subsidized? Have you ever asked why don’t they?”

Financially assisting ECE providers

- “Echoing the comments about the urgency and transparency with getting monetary relief out to child care providers and families.”
- “Echoing the urgency of getting the funding out immediately.”
- “We need the COVID relief monies NOW not later. We have been hearing that relief is coming...it is getting very hard for many programs to wait.”
- “The state has said they’re there; they’re going to help us. Trickle down is not what we need. We need support; we need it out there now.”
- “And so this is an urgent issue. Our system is in disarray and we need to stabilize and part of that is resources, rates, and getting relief out to providers as soon as we can.”