



## **Early Childhood Policy Council Meeting Summary: April 26, 2021**

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**Attendees:** Amelia Soto, AnnLouise Bonnitto, Antoinette Jacobs, Carola Oliva-Olson, Cheryl (Cherie) Schroeder, Dean Tagawa, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Debra Ward, Donna Sneeringer, Janet Zamudio, Kim Patillo Brownson, Kimberley Johnson, Khydeeja Alam Javid, Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, Lisette Frausto, Mary Ignatius, Mayra E. Alvarez, Miren Algorri, Naima Facih, Natali Gaxiola, Patricia Lozano, Patrick MacFarlane, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Sarah Neville-Morgan, Scott Moore, Sheryl Shushan, Sonia Jaramillo, Stephanie Myers, Tonia McMillian, Virginia Eigen, Zoila Carolina Toma

### **1. Welcome and Introductions (Kim Johnson)**

- Newly appointed Council Chair and California Department of Social Services Director, Kim Johnson, welcomed the Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) and the public to the special session.
- In her opening remarks, Chair Johnson thanked Council members and members of the public for engaging in ECPC meetings. She shared that there were over 6,800 attendees across the 12 ECPC meetings in 2020 and that the Council has already had 1,550 members of the public join meetings thus far in 2021. This demonstrates the support and interest of so many to learn more about early childhood development and its importance in California. Chair Johnson also welcomed two new members to the Council—appointed to this body by their colleagues on the Parent Advisory Committee—Mary Ignatius and Lisette Frausto.
- Chair Johnson reviewed the agenda for the special session and explained that the purpose for the meeting was to provide input on the Council’s draft letter to the Governor, Legislature, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Johnson also reminded the Council that she—along with Kris Perry and Giannina Perez—represent the Governor and have given updates on Council discussions that have taken place through official meetings.
- To maximize the amount of time spent discussing the Council’s budget recommendations, Chair Johnson 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.

### **2. March 17 Meeting Follow-Up on State Budget**

Council members Mayra Alvarez and Mary Ignatius engaged the Council in a discussion to obtain feedback on the draft letter.

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



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

The following sections provide a high-level overview of themes from the ECPC special session held on April 26, 2021.

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 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 April 26, 2021 convening of the ECPC was designed to capture feedback on a draft letter composed by Council members Mayra Alvarez and Mary Ignatius to the Governor’s Office, Legislature, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Council members collaborated to draft a letter requesting that state leadership “advance federal and state budget investments, maximize federal waivers, and implement policies that reflect our consensus priorities.” In the letter, two overarching priorities—originally shared in the March 17<sup>th</sup> convening—were the focus of the narrative:

**Priority 1:** Equitable access to services and supports for families to ensure successful recovery from the pandemic. This priority highlights marginalized populations and calls for specific actions for support and some examples of models to include.

**Priority 2:** We must adequately support all early childhood professionals that care for California’s young children by providing financial, economic, and housing supports for child care providers.<sup>1</sup>

The convening began with a review of both the purpose and content of the letter. The focus then shifted to gathering feedback and understanding on areas to improve/shape the letter such that it delivered a concise message while also capturing all the needs of the varying populations represented in the state of California.

The following key themes emerged from the Council’s discussion:

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<sup>1</sup> At the March 17<sup>th</sup> convening, these priorities were said to have encompassed everything that families and providers are experiencing; the draft letter is the primary vehicle for articulating these needs.



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Priority 1: Equitable access to services and supports for families to ensure successful recovery from the pandemic. This priority highlights marginalized populations and calls for specific actions for support and some examples of models to include.

### **Amending the draft to include explicit recognition of people groups:**

Several Council members elevated the importance of acknowledging black, Latino, and Tribal families and children. In addition, acknowledgement of children and families with identifiably higher needs—such as children with disabilities, low-income families, migrant families, “children touched by dependency,” and foster children—was suggested by multiple attendees as well.

Second to naming populations, inclusion of early learning and care programs, health services, family strengthening supports, and other educators in this component of the letter was a specific point of feedback given by more than one attendee.

Priority 2: We must adequately support all early childhood professionals that care for California’s young children by providing financial, economic, and housing supports for child care providers.

Council discussions for this priority area generated several recommendations about including clearer budget investment requests or amending existing language, including the following:

- Supporting the budget recommendation requests from Child Care Providers United and the ECE coalition.
- Making professional development its own, more independent point of emphasis in the letter, as increased wages and more professional development are currently presented together. Council members and public attendees stressed the importance of continued emphasis on professional development of early childhood workers independent of rates. Rewarding and incentivizing training were also requested amendments.
- Including specific provisions for child care providers and teachers, including general increases in funding and health and hygiene support for child care providers dealing with the pandemic effects, and supporting teachers with mental health.

### **General Themes**

In addition to priority-specific feedback, there were several general suggestions for revisions centered around voice and delivery that could apply to both priorities. Across both priorities, there was a general sentiment that wording should be stronger and more straightforward. In particular, the use of more direct words and phrases like “high quality,” “early learning,” and “allocate additional money” were suggested to give a higher degree of specificity to each priority’s scope and goals. An attendee also suggested renaming both items so that they carry equal weight, as numbers and sequencing could make one seem more important than the other.