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April 30, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom  
State of California  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Pro Tem Toni Atkins  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Kris Perry  
Deputy Secretary and Senior Advisor  
1600 Ninth Street Room 460  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Speaker Anthony Rendon  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Gianina Perez  
Senior Policy Advisor  
State of California  
California State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor, Madam Pro Temp, Mr. Speaker, and Ms. Perry, and Ms. Perez,

We at the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](https://cscce.berkeley.edu), University of California, Berkeley are writing to provide considerations for the Proposed Budget and use of federal relief dollars. As you know, California's paid ECE workforce is comprised of about 117,000 people,<sup>1</sup> the majority of whom are women of color.<sup>2</sup> Despite their complex and skilled work to support young children's learning and development, early educators are grappling with low wages and economic insecurity with no or limited paid leave or health benefits to protect their health and well-being. **Early educators in our state earn a median wage of \$13.43 and have a poverty rate of 17 percent, nearly 7 times as high as K-8 teachers.**<sup>3</sup> In our current reality of a global health pandemic, a heightened awareness of systemic racism, and California's commitment to advancing equity, we urge you to leverage state and federal investments to prioritize explicit strategies that will disrupt the historic and current underpayment and undervaluing of the ECE workforce.

In recognition that funds directed to child care programs will not necessarily reach individual staff, both CRRSA and ARPA explicitly allow states to direct funding to compensation, and we implore you to ensure that a portion of these funds goes directly to members of the ECE workforce. Individual early educators require immediate relief in recognition of their critical contributions to California's infrastructure as they have continued to work through strenuous conditions, for poverty-level wages, since the beginning of this pandemic. The early care and education workforce

<sup>1</sup>McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/>

<sup>2</sup>Austin, L.J.E., Edwards, B., Whitebook, M.(2018). California's ECE Workforce: What we know now and the data deficit that remains. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/californias-ece-workforce/>

<sup>3</sup>McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – California State Profile

deserve economic dignity<sup>4</sup> including the resources to care for their own family and children. While federal relief alone is not enough to make the long-term investment that our ECE system so desperately needs, this is an opportunity to shift the paradigm for the way we support and recognize early educators.

We recommend that California include the following provisions in the disbursement of federal funds in support of the early care and education workforce.

**Recommendation 1. Ensure federal child care relief funds reach individual early care and education staff in the form of direct cash payments.**

It is crucial that state leaders and agencies create rapid channels to provide easy-to-access relief funding to all individual ECE workers now. While allocating funds directly to programs is necessary, the reality is that these dollars may not fully reach the workforce as many programs experienced financial collapse and therefore may not prioritize funds for staff compensation. To get money directly to the workforce, a requirement for a portion of program grants to be applied to employee compensation can be set. For example, require 30% to 50% of each grant to a provider to be applied to compensation increases to include wages and benefits such as retirement contributions. The American Rescue Plan guidance outlines allowable costs such as premium pay and retention and recruitment allowances that can be leveraged. Further, family child care providers should explicitly be eligible to utilize these allowable costs for support for themselves in addition to providing this for their staff.

**Recommendation 2. Provide health coverage and guaranteed paid leave.**

Pre-pandemic, the workforce was grappling with lack of access to affordable health coverage and limited or no paid leave. The pandemic has placed them between a rock and a hard place having to make impossible choices between their own health, their families health, and their livelihood.<sup>5</sup> All staff working in regulated ECE programs should have access to resources that assist with COVID-19 related costs (i.e. health insurance premiums) and be afforded at least two weeks of paid leave for COVID-related needs which may include vaccination-related leave, quarantine due to exposure or contracting COVID-19, leave to care for a family member or other related reasons. California has already extended COVID sick leave to businesses with 25 or more employees and to family child care providers serving children with subsidies. This could be an opportunity to use funds to extend paid sick leave to those who do not currently fall under these provisions.

**Recommendation 3. Ensure access to public safety net programs are not compromised for the workforce**

Early educators have continuously shown high rates of utilizing public income support programs.<sup>6</sup> We recommend adjustments of eligibility requirements for public safety net programs utilized by early childhood personnel until the period when all child care related state ARPA funds are

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<sup>4</sup>Sperling, G. (2019). Economic Dignity: We must not lose sight of what economic policy is all about: allowing people to lead dignified lives. *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, (52). Retrieved from <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/52/economic-dignity/>

<sup>5</sup>Doocy, S., Kim, Y., Montoya, E., & Chávez, R. (2021). The Consequences of Invisibility: COVID-19 and the Human Toll on California Early Educators. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from [https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CSCCE\\_The-Consequences-of-Invisibility\\_2021.pdf](https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CSCCE_The-Consequences-of-Invisibility_2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018); Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L.J.E. (2016). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2016. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley; Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/worthy-work-still-unlivable-wages/>; McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Whitebook, M., & Olson, K.L. (2021). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2020. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/report-pdf/>

liquidated to ensure that early educators do not lose valuable assistance as a result of receiving premium pay or retention and recruitment allowances.

#### **Recommendation 4. Prioritize equitable distribution of funding**

Although the early educator workforce is racially and linguistically diverse, there are existing inequities within the ECE workforce that are inextricably linked, including funding source (e.g., whether the child care center is dependent upon parent fees or publicly funded through federal Head Start, state-based public pre-K, and/or child care subsidy vouchers); ages of the children served, and the race/ethnicity of the educators.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is critical that the equitable distribution of funding is considered to mitigate some of the inequities entrenched in the ECE system. For example, prioritization for programs located in communities with the most need and who have been impacted most acutely by this pandemic and mapping onto existing COVID-19 equity metrics in the state. While not specific to ECE, the [RACE COUNTS Project](#) in California provides a model for prioritizing an equitable recovery.

#### **Recommendation 5. Improve systems administration and technical assistance to facilitate accessible, simple application processes.**

Too often, access to public programs is designed to screen people out, by establishing complex eligibility requirements and application processes, and failing to provide easily accessible information in terms and languages that are accessible. We encourage use of ARPA technical assistance funds to 1) leverage data about providers, employees, licensing capacity, etc. before requiring redundant information of individuals, 2) invest in systems that make applying for and reporting on funds streamlined for applicants, 3) take necessary steps to reach all members of the workforce to provide information regarding eligibility, 4) keep application guidance and procedures brief, 5) work with local community-based organizations who may be best positioned to reach early education programs and staff and do so in multiple languages, 6) establish multiple channels of engagement with the early education workforce to disseminate information and receive feedback in order to course-correct and make adjustments if processes are ineffective or challenges arise, and 7) increase capacity to audit funding that goes to provider sites with respect to requirements for workforce compensation and payment.

#### **Recommendation 6. Establish essential, yet simple data collection protocols.**

There is a data deficit regarding what we know about California's ECE workforce<sup>8</sup>, contributing to determinations about the workforce that are made with scant information, which can lead to deciding that a policy does not work and moving on to developing new initiatives without sufficient or accurate information to assess impact and effectiveness or guide new approaches.<sup>9</sup> In the upcoming months, [CSCCE's 2020 California ECE Workforce Study](#) will provide the most up-to-date comprehensive data on the workforce since 2006. There is still a great deal that can be learned through the assessment of the utilization and impact of ARPA funding and informing future policies and resource allocation. Notwithstanding the tension between burdensome reporting

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<sup>7</sup> Austin, L.J.E., Edwards, B., Chavez, R., & Whitebook, M. (2019). Racial Wage Gaps in Early Education Employment. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/racial-wage-gaps-in-early-education-employment/>

<sup>8</sup> Austin, L. J., Edwards, B., & Whitebook, M. (2018). California's ECE Workforce: What We Know Now and the Data Deficit That Remains. *Center for the Study of Child Care Employment*. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/californias-ece-workforce/>

<sup>9</sup> Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L.J.E. (2018). *The Workforce Data Deficit: Who it Harms and How it Can Be Overcome*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Workforce-Data-Deficit.pdf>

requirements for programs and staff, data collection is necessary in order to assess equitable allocation of resources and correct as necessary in future efforts. As with the application processes above, we urge lead agencies to draw on existing data before requiring redundant information of programs or individuals, and investing in systems streamline reporting for applicants. Lead agencies should be able to answer how many staff received compensation increases, in what form, what amount and the size of the increase based on pre-grant wages, and what other benefits like health insurance, paid leave and retirement contributions were received. They should be able to further discern this information by job role, program auspices, zip code, and staff demographics.

**Recommendation 7. Prohibit the use of quality ratings as a determining factor for eligibility to receive ARPA funds or to condition levels of payment.**

Tying access to essential relief for the workforce and recovery for programs to quality ratings will create inequities. Programs have not had equitable resources and opportunity to have their foundational program and staffing conditions met and such criteria will only drive existing inequities in which the most under-resourced programs are systematically penalized for having less income and serving families who are also under-resourced.

We will be releasing a more detailed set of recommendations for how ARPA funds can be leveraged across states to directly provide relief to the ECE workforce and will share that information with you. We are happy to discuss any questions you may have about our research and implications for the ECE workforce. You can also visit our [COVID-19 Resource page](#) to keep up with our latest research and policy recommendations.

Respectfully Submitted,



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