

January 30, 2024

**MEMO**

To: The Planning and Oversight Commission of the Sacramento Children's Fund

Cc: Jackie Beecham and Rene Kausin, YPCE  
Mayor Steinberg and Members of the City Council

From: Julie Gallelo, Lindsay Dunckel, Commissioners- First 5 Sacramento  
Adonai Mack and Heidi Keiser- Child Action, Inc.  
Sheila Boxley- Child Abuse Prevention Council  
Jim Keddy- Youth Forward  
Michelle Callejas, Director- Sacramento County Dept of Child, Family & Adult Services  
Julie Montali and Christine Smith- Sacramento County Office of Education

Re: Recommendations for the Early Childhood Priority

Over the last five months, we have gathered as a group of leaders active in early childhood policy here in Sacramento to develop recommendations for you as the Oversight Commission for the Children's Fund. As you know, Measure L established early childhood as one of the five priority areas for the Children's Fund. We are very pleased to be part of this important moment as we all come together to advance the wellbeing of children and youth. Thank you for your leadership and for your willingness to consider these recommendations.

As we have discussed both the opportunities and the needs of young families in Sacramento, we have identified three primary recommendations for you.

Child care

Sacramento families desperately need greater access to affordable quality child care. As of 2021, Sacramento County only had enough licensed child care slots to accommodate 29% of children with working parents. The availability of adequate early education programs that meet families' needs is essential for economic stability. This lack of access particularly impacts families experiencing financial insecurity. Many live in a constant, stressful scramble to find care attainable within the confines of tight budgets. This stress impacts the wellbeing of the parent and the child. Access to stable child care has a positive impact on the local economy. Local businesses gain access to these parents, yielding new employees. In turn, these new employees are spending in the local community, at neighborhood grocery stores, dry cleaners, among other small businesses.

We recommend that the City draw upon the Children's Fund to assist people with opening and expanding child care programs. The City of Sacramento created over 35 new child care facilities through the use of ARPA dollars. To help those providers stay in business, funding training

opportunities and other supports is critical. To incentivize the creation of child care businesses, we recommend that the city eliminate fees on Early Care and Education start-up businesses. The City could also cover the fees associated with training in CPR for child care workers.

In addition, we recommend that the city require local housing developers to support child care by 1. Including a child care center in their housing developments or 2. Paying a fee to generate funds for the development of child care centers. In particular, we recommend the co-location of early care and education facilities with affordable and transitional housing developments.<sup>i</sup> The City should also explore using city owned facilities as potential spaces that could be leased for child care. The City of San Diego is adapting dozens of city properties for use hosting child-care facilities to serve city workers and residents in underserved areas.

### Supporting Early School Success

We recommend that the City fund programs that support early school success, which lays the foundation for later school success, including growth in graduation rates and a reduction in dropout rates. Specifically, we recommend funding summer school programs for children entering kindergarten, with a priority given to low-income communities that have fewer supports for early school success. The City could enter into a partnership with local school districts and co-fund such readiness programs. These programs could be based at city libraries, community centers and/or local schools. For a relatively modest investment, we could see significant benefit to young children and their families.

We also recommend that the City consider supporting the launch of [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) in Sacramento to provide children ages 0 to 5 with an age-appropriate book mailed directly to them every month. Currently, the [California State Library](#) will match half the cost of bringing this worldwide child literacy program to our city and is currently supporting efforts in 30 California counties. City staff are already part of an advisory group working on this idea with the Sacramento County Office of Education. This effort could be coordinated with local libraries as part of reading programs and parent education efforts. Again, with a modest investment and through partnering with other child-serving agencies, the City could make a long-term impact on children in our city.

### Economic Supports for Families with Young Children

The Early Childhood Priority Workgroup has three recommendations related to Economic Supports for consideration by the Planning and Oversight Commission:

1. Join the Guaranteed Income Program efforts already underway in Sacramento to create a stable, long-term initiative
2. Provide rental assistance to families with young children to avoid homelessness and trauma
3. Fund family support Navigators to help families access the services for which they are eligible

The responsibility of parenting can be overwhelming, especially when families are faced with a crisis and/or lack the support and concrete resources that they need. Research shows that safe, stable, nurturing relationships are critical to mitigate toxic stress for young children. Toxic stress “gets under the skin” and negatively impacts children into adulthood. While there are many experiences in childhood that are associated with poor outcomes later in life, being raised in poverty is of primary concern. One strategy to address childhood poverty that is being implemented in Sacramento is a Guaranteed Income Program (GIP). The positive impacts of GIPs are well documented and include:

- Increase in financial security, food security and nutrition
- Increase in full-time & part-time employment and/or more stable employment
- Improvement in both time and quality of parent-child interactions
- Improved mental health (reduced stress, anxiety, depression, anger, increased sleep, etc.)
- Gains in physical health outcomes
- Increased ability to pay off debt
- Increase in positive educational outcomes Increased access to stable child care
- Increase in stable housing
- Reductions in involvement with Child Welfare

We recommend that the City enter into a partnership with United Way Capitol Region and with the County of Sacramento to develop a stable, long-term guaranteed basic income program for low-income families with young children.

Additionally, we recommend providing financial support in the form of emergency rental assistance to low-income families who have young children. By providing vulnerable families with emergency rental assistance, the City will prevent homelessness among young families and will help prevent childhood trauma.

The final recommendation in this area is to provide funding to non-profit organizations to help families with young children navigate complicated systems of care. Systems navigation services are vital to ensure that families are aware of and connected to the various support services available to them. The County is currently using ARPA funding to provide family support navigators at 15 family resource centers and Black Child Legacy Campaign community hubs. These navigators are meeting families where they’re at and “have a license to operate” in community where families are furthest from resources. They are trusted individuals working within trusted agencies and are successfully removing barriers and improving uptake into early learning programs, parenting education/family strengthening programs, health/mental health services and more. The County’s ARPA funding will culminate by the end of 2025 and the navigators will be lost, resulting in a decrease in families engaged in services. We recommend that the City assume funding for the Navigators when the County funds end, to ensure continuity of services for families living within the city boundaries.

We would be happy to provide you with more details on the above recommendations, including budget estimates. We would also be pleased to meet with city staff and consultants assigned to the Children’s Fund to review these recommendations.

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<sup>i</sup> For more information on the co-location of early childhood and housing developments, see *Building Better for Families: Policy Strategies for the Co-Location of Early Care and Education Facilities and Affordable Housing*, by Rachel Hammond, May 2021, Low Income Investment Fund, <https://www.liifund.org/policy/building-better-for-families-policies-for-co-locating-homes-child-care/>