

RECOMMENDED PURSUIT OF POSITIONS – PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND GOVERNOR’S 2026-27 PROPOSED BUDGET: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Introduction

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development Commission (Policy Roundtable) firmly believes that all young children in Los Angeles County have an undeniable right to develop and thrive without explicit and implicit bias. Due to structural inequity, all legislation and policies should be examined through an equity lens to build a system where all children have access to high quality, affordable early care and education (ECE). With this as a core value, the Policy Roundtable recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the following proposed pursuit of positions to increase access to and strengthen the ECE system:

- 1) Support AB 1981 and similar measures that require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to provide a definitive timeline and annual updates regarding CDSS’s transition to new reimbursement rates based on the alternative methodology
- 2) Support AB 2379 and similar measures that strengthen protections for immigrant child care providers and the children they serve by notifying child care providers of their constitutional rights when confronted by immigration enforcement
- 3) Support proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget item and similar measures that strengthen child care infrastructure, specifically targeted toward communities impacted by recent fires

This document provides a brief analysis of each proposed policy position and justification. It concludes with the recommended pursuit of positions and demonstrated consistency with existing Los Angeles County legislative policies.

- 1) Support AB 1981 and similar measures that require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to provide a definitive timeline and annual updates regarding CDSS’s transition to new reimbursement rates based on the alternative methodology**

Summary Analysis of Proposed Legislation

Current child care subsidy reimbursement rates do not cover the full cost of operating ECE programs serving income eligible families. As a result, early educators earn inadequate wages and have few benefits thereby driving early educators away from the profession, as well as deter new people from entering the ECE workforce. In California, 65 percent of the ECE workforce are women of color.¹ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2023 California was home to more than 37,000 child care workers and the average annual salary for this workforce was \$40,060.² By comparison, the living wage in Los Angeles County for a single adult with one child is \$101,200.³ The California ECE Workforce Study also found that in 2023, 50 percent of early educators in family child care homes, 38 percent of Assistants/Aides in early education centers, and 29 percent of teachers in early education centers participated in at least one or more public assistance programs.⁴

¹ Kim, Y., Austin, L.J.E., & Hess, H. (2024). The Multilayered Effects of Racism on Early Educators in California: An Examination of Disparities in Wages, Leadership Roles, and Education. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. March 23, 2024 <https://csce.berkeley.edu/publications/report/effects-of-racism-on-california-early-educators>

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Query System. March 2, 2025 <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/occGeo/One%20occupation%20for%20multiple%20geographical%20areas>

³ Living Wage Calculation for Los Angeles County, California. (2025). Massachusetts Institute of Technology. March 2, 2025 <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06037>

⁴ Muruvi, W., Powell, A, Kim, Y., Coperman Petig, A., and Austin, L., The Economic Well-Being of Early Educators in California (2024). Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. March 2, 2025 <https://csce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/CA-economic-wellbeing-2024-1.pdf>

Many families struggle to find the child care they need. In 2023, more than 85 percent (1.8 million) of California’s children eligible for subsidized child care were not accessing these services.⁵ Inadequate reimbursement rates suppress wages causing an ECE workforce shortage and limited supply of programs to meet child care needs of working families.

Welfare and Institutions Code section 10227.6 (i) states that the Governor and Legislature shall, by no later than July 1, 2025, establish reimbursement rates based on the alternative methodology and if the new reimbursement rates established do not take effect on July 1, 2025, the CDSS shall provide the Legislature with the department’s anticipated timeline for transitioning from the rates that are in effect on July 1, 2025, to the new reimbursement rates established and new reimbursement rates have not been established. A timeline to transition from the current regional market reimbursement rate methodology based on “how much parents can pay” to the new reimbursement rates based on a “cost estimation model” has not been provided to the Governor nor the Legislature. This delay is resulting in continued implementation of inadequate reimbursement rates for ECE providers compounded by the absence of a definitive timeline for transitioning to the alternative methodology. To address this, Assembly Bill (AB 1981), introduced by Assembly Majority Leader Aguiar-Curry, requires DPSS to provide the Chairperson of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee the department’s timeline for transitioning from the current reimbursement rates to the new reimbursement rates by January 31, 2027, and every subsequent year until the rates established in section 10227.6 (i) are in effect.

Justification

The State of California has committed to transition how it calculates its subsidized child care reimbursement rates from a market-based approach to a cost-based model. This is a positive step forward to closing the gap between expenses and revenue, addressing long standing inequities in the system, and stopping the cycle of early educators continually receiving low wages. It is recommended that Los Angeles County support AB 1981 and similar measures that require the state to be explicit about the implementation timeline of the new reimbursement rates. Publicly provided information about progress toward implementing the new reimbursement rate methodology will help recruit and retain valuable ECE staff to serve children.

- 2) **Support AB 2379 and similar measures that strengthen protections for immigrant child care providers and the children they serve by notifying child care providers of their constitutional rights when confronted by immigration enforcement**

Summary Analysis of Proposed Legislation

Nearly 50 percent of Los Angeles County child care providers are immigrants and one in two children in the Los Angeles Metro Area has at least one immigrant parent.^{6,7} California students have the right to attend public school in the State free from discrimination, harassment, violence, intimidation, and bullying (CA Education Code [EC] 220, 234, et seq.). The threat of immigration enforcement can impair the ability of students, regardless of their immigration status, to thrive and

⁵ Pryor, L. and Schumacher K., The Unmet Need for Child Care Remains Staggeringly High (2025). California Budget & Policy Center. March 2, 2025 <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/the-unmet-need-for-child-care-remains-staggeringly-high/>

⁶ Ali, U., Brown, J., and Herbst, C., Secure Communities as Immigration Enforcement: How Secure is the Child Care Market? (2024). Journal of Public Economics. March 2, 2025 <https://docs.iza.org/dp15821.pdf>

⁷ Profile of the Foreign-born Population in Los Angeles, California (2023), Vera Institute of Justice. March 2, 2025 <https://vera-institute.files.svdcn.com/production/downloads/publications/profile-of-foreign-born-population-los-angeles-long-beach.pdf>

receive an equitable education.⁸ Deportation threats can negatively impact children’s mental and physical health and long-term development as well as the health and well-being of early educators. Family child care homes are essential to Los Angeles County’s child care system, particularly for working and immigrant families. These ECE providers care for children in their homes which makes them uniquely vulnerable to intimidation, misinformation, and unlawful searches or arrests by law enforcement, including federal immigration authorities. Without clear, accessible education of their rights, ECE providers may unknowingly allow unlawful entry into their homes or feel pressured to comply with actions that violate constitutional protections. Fear and confusion around immigration enforcement can force ECE providers to close their doors, disrupting care for families and putting children at risk. Assembly Bill 2379, introduced by Assemblymember Solache, seeks to provide licensed and license-exempt family child care providers with information about their constitutional rights when confronted by immigration enforcement to protect themselves, the children in their care, and the families they serve. Specifically, AB 2379 will:

- Require CDSS to notify all licensed and license-exempt family child care providers of their Fourth Amendment rights
- Require development of a plain-language, multilingual training program for child care providers on their rights and responsibilities
- Require child care providers to complete this training within specified timeframes to ensure consistent statewide understanding of their rights
- Take effect immediately as an urgency statute to protect access to child care without fear of harassment or unwarranted searches

Justification

AB 2379, also known as Protecting Family Child Care Providers’ Constitutional Rights, builds on California’s law that recognizes child care sites as sensitive locations. Passage of AB 2379 and similar measures to protect immigrant child care providers and the families they serve will help child care doors remain open and safe from intimidation, misinformation, and unlawful searches or arrests by law enforcement, including federal immigration authorities.

3) Support proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget item and similar measures that strengthen child care infrastructure, specifically targeted toward communities impacted by recent fires

Summary Analysis of Proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget Item

In January 2025, the Los Angeles County wildfires severely impacted the child care sector, reducing the system's capacity in the County by 2,802 licensed ECE spaces. According to California Community Care Licensing, licensed child care providers submitted 339 incident reports documenting a wide range of impacts from the fires. Across Los Angeles County, 42 ECE licensed facilities were destroyed, including 23 centers and 19 family child care homes. In addition, nine ECE-licensed facilities were significantly damaged (6 centers, 3 family child care homes), and 30 license-exempt Family, Friends, and Neighbors (FFN) providers were impacted. According to Pasadena Community Foundation’s (PCF) Six-Month Impact Report of the Eaton Fire, “Child care providers and their client families are among those most profoundly impacted by the Eaton Fire.”⁹ PCF also reports that more than half of the licensed family child care home

⁸ Joy Ee, J. and Gandara, P., Under Siege: The Disturbing Impact of Immigration Enforcement on the Nation’s Schools (2020). Immigration Initiative at Harvard. March 2, 2025 https://immigrationinitiative.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/brief_2_english.pdf

⁹ Pasadena Community Foundation, *Resilience: Six-Month Impact Report, Eaton Relief and Recovery Fund*. July 7, 2025. https://pasadenacf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PCF-201.pdf?utm_source=

facilities in Altadena were damaged or destroyed, “while 60 percent of the spaces previously available for children are no longer available.”¹⁰ ECE providers are essential to the recovery of these areas and their ability to reopen allows families to return to work and the area, children regain stability, and neighborhoods rebuild. ECE programs operate on slim margins and most do not have the resources to rebuild or repair their facilities without financial support. A few organizations have provided financial support to child care providers impacted by the fires to re-establish their programs and while this funding has been helpful it does not go far enough. For example, the Low Income Investment Fund’s LA Rise program provided \$1.3 million in grant funding to help ECE providers impacted by the fires rebuild and reopen; however, applicants who applied for grants had more than \$14 million in damages.¹¹ The Governor’s Budget Summary 2026-27 includes “an increase of \$11.5 million one-time Proposition 64 funding for child care infrastructure, specifically targeted toward communities impacted by recent fires.”¹²

Justification

According to the 2022 Los Angeles County ECE Needs Assessment, Los Angeles County only has licensed capacity through centers and family child care homes to serve 4 percent of children ages birth to 23 months and 26 percent to serve children ages two to five.¹³ The Los Angeles County wildfires significantly reduced the already limited capacity to serve young children in fire impacted areas. Additionally, many child care providers impacted by the fires want to return and reopen but do not have the financial resources to rebuild or repair damaged facilities or renovate a space to move into. The proposed \$11.5 million funding included in the Governor’s Budget Summary 2026-27 will be critical to helping ECE programs rebuild, reopen, and help families regain stability.

Recommended Pursuit of Position – Support

The Policy Roundtable, with input from the Joint Committee on Legislation, recommends a position of support in the following areas to improve the ECE system:

- 1) Support AB 1981 and similar measures that require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to provide a definitive timeline and annual updates regarding CDSS’s transition to new reimbursement rates based on the alternative methodology
- 2) Support AB 2379 and similar measures that strengthen protections for immigrant child care providers and the children they serve by notifying child care providers of their constitutional rights when confronted by immigration enforcement
- 3) Support proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget item and similar measures that strengthen child care infrastructure, specifically targeted toward communities impacted by recent fires

County Legislative Policy

These positions are consistent with the Los Angeles County 2025 State Legislative Platform:

¹⁰ Pasadena Community Foundation, *Resilience: Six-Month Impact Report, Eaton Relief and Recovery Fund*. July 7, 2025. https://pasadenacf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PCF-201.pdf?utm_source=

¹¹ Los Angeles Recovery and Investment in Service of Early Care and Education (LA Rise) Fund, Fact Sheet. February 28, 2026.

¹² Governor’s Budget Summary 2026-27. March 2, 2026. <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/BudgetSummary/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>

¹³ California County Local Child Care Planning Council Needs Assessment – Los Angeles, prepared by Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education. February 26, 2026. <https://childcare.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Child-Care-Needs-Assessment-Los-Angeles-County-FINAL-11.3.22.pdf>

Human Services

- Increase access to high-quality ECE services provided by a qualified and well compensated workforce.
- Increase and expand eligibility, including the elimination of immigration status restrictions, and decrease enrollment barriers, simplify eligibility determination and income reporting requirements, and/or increase automation and information sharing with state agencies.

Equity

- Address and combat discrimination based on age, disability, disease status, gender identity, language, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.

Justice, Public Safety, and Emergency Management Systems

- Improve wildfire prevention and fire safety services, including but not limited to, measures to increase financial assistance training, and other resources for local response.

Public Services and Infrastructure

- Prioritize disaster risk mitigation, prevention, and response efforts appropriate for urban and rural communities.

Additional Sources

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