

May 25, 2016

The Honorable Kevin de León
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Early Childhood Education and the 2016-17 State Budget

Dear President pro Tempore de León and Speaker Rendon:

This letter is sent on behalf of a broad-based coalition representing Silicon Valley business, faith-based, education, nonprofit, parent and local government organizations. Collectively we understand that investments in early childhood education not only ensure student success, but ultimately support California's economy and global competitiveness. Unfortunately, the Governor's May Budget Revision related to early education does not recognize this fact.

We applaud the both the Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees for rejecting the Governor's Early Education Block Grant and voucher proposals and for proposing vital, new funding for the early care and education system. On behalf of Silicon Valley's young children we continue to request the following as the Joint Legislative Budget Conference Committee begins their deliberations:

1. An initial investment of \$800 million in the 2016-17 budget to repair and reinvest in the state's early education system infrastructure

Current state investment in early education is still nearly \$800 million below investment levels in 2008. This lack of investment has translated to **8,000 low-income 3- and 4-year-olds in Silicon Valley having no access to services**; woefully underpaid teachers in existing state preschools; and over 4,400 childcare centers, providers and businesses statewide that have shut their doors since 2008. We fully support the Women's Caucus agenda related to reinvesting \$800 million in early childhood education.

2. Reject the Governor's Early Education Block Grant and Voucher proposals

The Governor's proposed shifts in early education funding and implementation will not only affect children but will affect thousands of stakeholders including schools, nonprofits and businesses. In Silicon Valley alone, the Early Education Block Grant proposal **will harm tens of thousands of children who are served by 32 local nonprofit organizations and 22 Local Education Agencies (LEA's)**. In addition, **the Governor's proposal to essentially eliminate Transitional Kindergarten (TK) will impact 125,000 students statewide and 4,600 students in Silicon Valley**. Shifting TK funding into a block grant – subject to annual budget debates, spending caps and potential cuts – is the equivalent of shifting first grade funding into a block grant. What was once part of a free public education system will no longer be the case. The Governor's proposal is unacceptable to children and families and flies in the face of the California Constitution that guarantees free, public education.

It is no surprise that not a single parent or viable organization in the state supports the Governor's proposals related to early education. We applaud both the Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees for rejecting these proposals.

3. *Hold public policy discussions with early education experts and parents over the next year to design a streamlined, efficient and high-quality early education system.*

In February, the Department of Finance and Department of Education hosted a "*Stakeholder Process for the Proposed Early Education Block Grant.*" Over 200 written comments and recommendations were presented. Not a single, meaningful recommendation from the process was included in Governor's May Budget Revision. The Governor's desire to streamline the early education system can be accomplished. However, any proposed shifts in state funding should be discussed and vetted through thoughtful public policy discussions, led by experts in the field of early education, and not by the Department of Finance or through the truncated budget process. We applaud and support the Assembly Budget Subcommittee, and Speaker Rendon in particular, for proposing the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Commission that can help design an early care and education system that is streamlined, efficient and convenient for working families.

Early education is one of our region's top priorities and we are happy to see that it is also a top priority for the Legislature. Decades of research, members of the Legislature, and the public agree that early education programs are the best investment we can make to ensure student success and sustain California's global competitiveness. We urge you, the Joint Legislative Budget Conference Committee and the Governor to consider these budget requests related to early education. Our local and state economy, schools, children and families all depend on it.

Sincerely,

4Cs Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County
All Stars Helping Kids
Alum Rock Counseling Center
Bay Area Council
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
Child Care Partnership Council
Coastside Child Development Center
Congregation Beth Am
County of San Mateo
Creative Montessori Learning Center
Educare California at Silicon Valley
First 5 San Mateo County
First 5 Santa Clara County
Gardner Family Care Corporation
Go Kids, Inc.
Healthier Kids Foundation Santa Clara County
Institute for Human and Social Development

Kidango
Learning Links Preschool
Local Early Education Planning Council of Santa Clara County
Millbrae Nursery School
Peninsula Family Service
Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
San Mateo County Office of Education
San Mateo-Foster City School District
Santa Clara County Office of Education
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Sixth District PTA
SJB Child Development Centers
Somos Mayfair
The Health Trust
Toddle Flexible Preschool
VIVA Strategy + Communications

Cc: The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson, California State Senate District 19
Cathy McBride, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Governor's Office

