Envisioning Comprehensive Public Investment in Early Childhood Education and Well-Being

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Overview

• Early childhood is an important period for development and intervention.

• Investments in early child development have large payoffs.

• Other kinds of interventions can also improve young children’s outcomes, including income supports, nutrition support, home visiting, early child care, and neighborhood quality.

• A number of recent proposals and initiatives have advocated for investing in California’s young children.
Early childhood represents a key window for development

- The majority of brain development takes place from the prenatal period to age 3. Brain development continues through the rest of early childhood and into the teenage years.

- Both biology and lived experience in early childhood influence how brains develop, how genes are expressed, and what capabilities children develop.

(Neurons to Neighborhoods 2000)
Large disparities in children’s skills and knowledge are already present before entrance to kindergarten

• The reading achievement gap between low-income and high-income children is already large at school entrance, and changes little as children progress through school.

(Reardon, 2013)
Investments in early childhood education reduce disparities and improve long-term outcomes
Evidence for impact of preschool

• On average, children attending preschool gain about a third of a year of additional learning in language, reading, and math.

• Long-term benefits are evident even after test score differences disappear.

• Quality preschool is cost-effective, with long-term financial benefits of $3 to $7 for every $1 spent.

(Foundation for Child Development, 2013)
Many Factors Influence Children’s Ability to Reach Their Potential

- Material Well-Being: Income, Basic Needs
- Health: Nutrition, Health Care
- Parenting and Home Environment
- Preschool / ECE
- Neighborhood / Community
- Early Child Care Providers and Environment

Young Children’s Ability to Reach Their Potential
Investments in other supports for young children also reduce disparities and improve long-term outcomes
Evidence for income support

• Larger EITC payments are associated with fewer low-weight and premature births.

• An additional $3,730 a year (in $2017) in family income before age 6 is associated with improved school achievement equivalent to additional 2 months of schooling and a 17% increase in annual earnings as an adult, on average.

(CBPP, 2015)
Evidence for nutrition support

• Receipt of food stamps during pregnancy reduces low birth-weight by 5 to 23%.

• Access to food stamps during the prenatal and early childhood periods is associated with a 16% reduction in the risk of obesity as an adult and an 18% increase in the likelihood of completing high school.

(White House CEA, 2015)
Evidence for home visiting

High-quality home visiting programs are associated with improved outcomes in child health, child development and school readiness, child maltreatment, positive parenting, and family self-sufficiency.

(NOPRE, 2014)

Nurse Family Partnership program is associated with long-term benefits to participants and society of more than $24,000 per participant (in $2017).

(NFP, 2014)
Evidence for quality infant/toddler child care

- High-quality infant and toddler child care is linked to improved early cognitive and language outcomes.
- Benefits are particularly strong for children from the most disadvantaged home environments.

(Zero to Three, 2009)
Evidence for neighborhood quality

For children younger than 13, moving from a high-poverty neighborhood to a low-poverty neighborhood was associated with a 31% increase in earnings as an adult, on average.

(Chetty et al., 2015)
A number of recent proposals and initiatives have advocated for investing in California’s young children.
Right Start Commission
Rebuilding the California Dream

- Simplify and enable **universal access to early learning and care** for 0-5 year olds.
- Invest in **preventive health care** for young children.
- Support **public awareness and family education** about the importance of the early years.
- Build a more **family-responsive business community**.
Children Now

Starting Now: A Policy Vision for Supporting the Healthy Growth and Development of Every California Baby

• **Promote Healthy Children** through health care services, developmental screenings, nutrition support, child maltreatment services.

• **Foster Strong Families** through safety net programs and family income supports, home visiting programs, parental mental health screenings, and quality foster care services.

• **Enrich Early Learning** through parent and caregiver education, high-quality child care, child care quality improvement systems.

• **Strengthen Communities** through healthy environments, public parks, family-friendly community activities, addressing structural racism and segregation, reducing place-based disparities, and engaging communities in public decision-making.
GRACE Inc.
A Comprehensive Approach to Substantially Reduce Poverty in California

- **Pre-Natal and Early Services:** Home visiting for children in poverty ages 0 to 5.

- **Early Childhood Education and Child Care:** Subsidized child care and state preschool programs for children in poverty ages 0 to 4 (also afterschool programs for older children).

- **Access to Effective Job Training Programs for Parents:** Job training and employer tax credit programs.

- **Cradle-to-College-and-Career Continuum in Promise Zones:** Comprehensive neighborhood-based services to transform schools and communities.

- **Immediate Assistance for Families:** Increased CalWORKs grants and state EITC.
Children’s Defense Fund
Ending Child Poverty Now

• Enact a **state EITC**.

• Raise the **state minimum wage**.

• Expand **child care slots** for low-income children.

• Make the **state tax credit for child & dependent care expenses** refundable.

• Increase **CalWORKs benefits** and eliminate the **Maximum Family Grant** rule.

• Fund **transportation** for low-income children.

• Integrate **CalFresh enrollment** with health care enrollment.

• Fund the **state housing trust fund** for affordable housing for extremely low-income families.
California State Assembly
Speaker’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education

• **Objective:** “A policy-driven body tasked with developing strategic solutions to improve outcomes for some of California's youngest learners and their families.”

• **Topics:** Early brain development, increased access to ECE, eligibility standards in state child care and early education programs, provider reimbursement rate reform, universal early learning access, supporting California's growing workforce

• **Members:** Assemblymembers Garcia (Co-Chair), McCarty (Co-Chair), Ting, Rubio, Waldron, and Maienschein and nine community appointed Commissioners.
These plans show momentum to address the needs of California’s youngest children.
Research References

Neurons to Neighborhoods, 2000
Reardon, 2013
Foundation for Child Development, 2013
CBPP, 2015
White House CEA, 2015
OPRE, 2014
NFP, 2014
Zero to Three, 2009
Chetty et al., 2015