



May 1, 2019

Hon. Holly Mitchell, Chair
 Senate Budget Committee
 State Capitol, Room 5019
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Phil Ting, Chair
 Assembly Budget Committee
 State Capitol, Room 6026
 Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Budget Request for Improvements to the Stage 1 Child Care Program

Dear Chairpersons Mitchell and Ting:

The above organizations are pleased to support the “Strong Start for CalWORKs Families” budget request, which gives families entering the CalWORKs program the stable child care they need to get ahead and stay ahead. This request streamlines Stage 1 eligibility rules so that families have continuous, stable Stage 1 child care, minimizing costly and harmful disruptions for children, parents, employers, and child care providers. Over the last few years, we have made significant progress in addressing poverty and promoting equity through the budget process. The “Strong Start for CalWORKs Families” budget request is the next step in advancing economic

security for families struggling to make ends meet, and a strong start for all children, particularly children of color. This budget request would adopt the recommendations for Stage 1 child care contained in the Draft Report of the Blue Ribbon ECE Commission.

Stable child care is critical to strengthen parents' ability to work, improve their prospects in the job market, and increase their earning potential. Continuity of care creates the stable conditions children need for healthy development and preparing them for lifelong success, inside and outside of the classroom.

The lack of initial, stable child care holds families back and threatens their ability to fully benefit from the safety net supports of the CalWORKs program. Current law is supposed to give families affordable child care as they work or participate in welfare-to-work activities, however many families entering CalWORKs are not getting the Stage 1 child care that they need. Parents are often unaware that they even qualify for child care and the burdensome process of obtaining a child care authorization is full of unnecessary red tape. For families who do get a Stage 1 child care authorization, it is usually short-term, sporadic, and frequently disrupted, leaving them nowhere to turn. Moreover, when families do not have safe, stable child care for their children, this often leads to being sanctioned, resulting in benefit reductions that drive families into deep poverty and homelessness.

The "Strong Start for CalWORKs Families" budget request seeks to fulfill the promise made when the CalWORKs program was created 20 years ago, that families would have affordable child care to keep their children safe and learning, and that families would experience no break in child care services as they transitioned between the three CalWORKs child care stages. By providing the same 12 month eligibility used in all other subsidized child care programs, and using existing technology to ensure seamless transfers, this budget request gives children living in poverty in California a strong start.

When children can thrive and families can work and provide for their needs, California grows stronger immediately and in the future. For these reasons, our organizations urge you to support the Strong Start for CalWORKs Families budget request to streamline Stage 1 child care eligibility rules so that all families enrolled in CalWORKs are afforded the reliable, continuous child care necessary to improve their family's success and end the cycle of poverty.

Sincerely,

The Strong Start for CalWORKs Families Coalition: Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Bay Area Equal Voice Coalition, CAPP Alternative Payment Program, California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, California Community Colleges CalWORKs Association, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, California Partnership, Californians for Disability Rights, Causa Justa: Just Cause, Child Care Law Center, Child Care Resource Center, Child360, Children Now, Coleman Advocates Community Voices, Ella Baker Center, End Child Poverty Campaign, Equal Rights Advocates, First 5 California, Friends Committee on Legislation, GRACE, HHS Network California, Hand in Hand, Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Kidango, MomsRising.org, NCJW California Policy Advocacy Network, Parent Voices CA, Parent Voices Oakland, Public Interest Law Project, Starting Over Inc., Stronger California, Time for Change Foundation, Western Center on Law and Poverty, Women's Foundation of California, Working Partnerships USA