

Good morning my name is Jacquelyne Gattone, I am a member of Parent Voices Contra Costa. My 2 yr old son Matthew has been on the waitlist for 1 year. I have a 12 year old daughter who has also been on the waiting list and I'm still waiting for that call.

I'm here to speak for families on the waiting list to help you understand what it means to wait. Waiting for child care means childhood dreams shattered. I always wanted to own my own hair salon. My dream came true last year and I held on to it for 9 months until I had to close it because I couldn't afford child care. It means having to quit a second job and the constant fear that my third job in three years, one I'm really good at and have the potential to build a career, may slip from me because I can't afford child care. Being on the waitlist means spending 3-4 hours per day commuting between my home in Antioch, to an affordable and flexible family child care 20 mins away, and then to work for the City of Oakland. It means not being able to afford a reliable car and depending on public transportation and ubers to get me between three places. That's also loss of time to spend with my children who are missing out on my presence. It means having to miss out on my kid's school and sports activities and telling my daughter I have to miss another "Bring your loved one to lunch day" because it's impossible for me to attend it on my lunch break. It means living paycheck to paycheck but also pushing out some bills and constantly worrying.

Being on the waitlist has made me feel hopeless, frustrated and stressed. It means losing sleep because I'm in a constant panic. Not knowing is the hardest pill to swallow. To many of us families, the waiting list is really the "no hope list." I've recently learned about the Governor's proposed budget and heard you all discussing it. It leaves me heartbroken that there's no child care before your kid is 4 yrs old. Of the children on the waiting list, 86% of them are children of color. Matthew is one of them. The odds are stacking up against him as an African American boy, but I am here because I don't want him to get lost in all the data and statistics. He's here with me today because I want his face to be a reminder of what's at stake.

Having childcare assistance impacts both the child and the parent. For my son, it would help him to have advancement opportunities once he starts school and in an environment that enhances his skills. As a parent, I would be able to spend more time with my kids without having to work such long hours to compensate for childcare. It would help me catch up on my bills and help me advance at this City job that provides benefits. My employer sees how hard I work, I am proving to be someone they want to support, it's affordable child care that will either make me or break me.

To wait for childcare is an emotional roller coaster for the parent and the child. It should be available for working parents that need the assistance. If things get so bad, do I really need to

lose another job opportunity and go to Calworks to get childcare? It seems that is the only option. For Matthew and all his peers, we ask that you invest \$1 billion in child care for the next three years so that his childhood dreams can be even bigger than mine.

Thank you.