SUMMARY

California is home to the nation's largest population of dual language learners (DLLs). Recognizing the unique linguistic needs of our State, the Governor released the "Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids (Master Plan)." The Master Plan outlines a roadmap for building comprehensive and equitable early learning systems over the next decade and includes a strong focus on supporting DLLs.

AB 393 takes a critical step in implementing the recommendations from the Governor's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care for supporting DLLs.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, California passed Proposition 58, the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative, repealing a law limiting K-12 instruction to English only. Additionally, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the California English Learner Roadmap policy in 2017. The passage of these assets-based policies meant California collectively rejects the notion that languages other than English are barriers to learning and success. Moreover, the State took the stance that encouraging and nurturing home languages along with English fluency helps young children develop and broadens their understanding of the diverse world around them.

In December 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom released the Master Plan designed to transform the State's robust, mixed delivery early learning and care system. The Master Plan builds upon the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission's report which states that access to high-quality early learning and care improves outcomes for all children and families, and helps address racial and economic inequities. It calls for asset-based DLL identification as a first step to supporting the needs of this large population of California's children.

Understanding the need to support DLLs, Assemblywoman Luz Rivas took the initiative and authored AB 1363 (*Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 498, Statutes of 2021*) in 2021. The bill was signed into law and took the first step of implementing the Master Plan by requiring the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a standardized process for California State Preschool Program providers to identify DLLs.

PROBLEM

Sixty percent of children under age six come from homes where English is not the primary language. Students are usually assessed and identified as English Learners when they enter kindergarten. However, it is important to identify DLLs when they enter preschool in order to design programs and train teachers to support children in ways that intentionally develop their home language and English. Research shows that achieving fluency in multiple languages benefits children and students by broadening their cognitive flexibility, enhancing their ability to learn, and giving students the opportunity to become bi- or multi-lingual so that they are competitive in the global workforce.

Despite the state's acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity as assets, there is no consistent manner of identifying DLLs in California's Early Learning and Care system, apart from California State Preschool Programs (CSPP). This impairs the ability of state policymakers to make informed decisions over resources and other critical elements of early learning programs that could be leveraged to nurture and develop the early linguistic assets of these children for their benefit and the greater benefit of California.

SOLUTION

AB 393 continues the work of 2021's AB 1363 in achieving the goals of the Master Plan to identify and support DLLs. Specifically, this bill will require the Department of Social Services to develop a standardized process for general child care and development programs to identify DLLs, and require programs to report key aggregated information about DLLs to the state.

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