



EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA POLICY AGENDA

ABOUT EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA

Early Edge California is a nonprofit organization that works to advance policy changes and investments that will expand access to high-quality Early Learning and Care programs for children from birth to age 8. Since 2003, Early Edge California has been a leader in Early Learning and Care in California, advocating for high-quality universal preschool, an asset-based approach to identifying and supporting Dual Language Learners (DLLs), promoting investment in the professional development, training, and compensation of Early Learning and Care teachers and caregivers, and supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care.

VISION

High-quality Early Learning and Care has a positive impact on children's socio-emotional development, cognitive ability, and academic achievement both in the short- and long-term. The years between birth and age 5 are critical for brain development, and how families and caregivers interact with young children during this time makes a difference in all future learning, behavior, and health. Early Edge California's work is guided by the vision that all children should receive high-quality, racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally responsive early education, enter kindergarten ready to learn, and thrive through 3rd grade and beyond.

FUNDING FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL AND CHILD CARE TO SUPPORT A HIGH-QUALITY MIXED-DELIVERY SYSTEM

Federal investments in universal preschool and child care are necessary to strengthen California's mixed-delivery system of Early Learning and Care. These funds will allow states like California to meet demand and provide a full continuum of care from programs for infants and toddlers to Transitional Kindergarten (TK). With strong federal investment, families will be able to choose from a variety of preschool options for their young children, including Head Start, California State Preschool Program, licensed child care centers and family child care, and TK as an option for 4-year-olds.

EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA SUCCESS STORY

Universal Preschool for all California 4-years-olds through the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK). For many years, Early Edge has helped lead the way for a free universal preschool program. Based on legislation of which Early Edge was the lead sponsor, in the 2021–22 State Budget, California Governor Gavin Newsom made history by expanding California's TK program to serve all 4-year-olds. TK is a local education agency-based preschool program that currently provides 4-year-olds born between September and December with a free year of preschool. By expanding TK to serve all 4-year-olds, California is providing a universal preschool program that ensures all families have access to at least one-year of free preschool prior to starting kindergarten. Once implemented, the TK program will have close to 400,000 slots available for California's children, making it the largest program in the nation.

Early Edge California Urges Congress to Advance the Following Policy Solutions:

- Legislation and funding to support states in establishing or expanding a mixed-delivery system of high-quality, inclusive preschool for all 3- and 4-year olds.
- Allocate at least \$390 billion dollars for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to provide high-quality Early Learning and Care options for low-income families, including informal care providers, and raise reimbursement rates for all providers and educators.
- Provide funding this year to continue historic short-term investments in child care and avert a \$48 million funding cliff. The American Rescue Plan, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act provided much-needed short-term relief for the child care sector, which is set to expire in the next two years. These investments are still urgently needed.

IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS (DLLs)

Nearly 7.5 million children age zero-five in the U.S. are DLLs; this means that 33% of children age zero-five in the U.S. are DLLs.¹ This percentage is even higher in California, where nearly 60% of children five and under live in homes where a language other than English is spoken. Incorporating ways that teachers can support the learning and development of DLLs is not a choice, but a necessity. Loss of home language in the early years due to lack of support, combined with incomplete English development, causes DLLs to fall behind in kindergarten, impacting future achievement, including high school and college completion rates. Research shows that DLLs have better long-term academic outcomes when they receive support in preserving their home language.

EARLY EDGE CALIFORNIA SUCCESS STORY

DLL Identification: Early Edge California co-sponsored legislation, AB 1363, which was signed into law on October 5, 2021. With this historic policy, California became the first state in the nation to establish an asset-based process to identify DLLs in State Preschool Programs.



Early Edge California Urges Congress to Advance the Following Policy Solutions:

- Set-aside funding for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to assist States in developing an asset-based approach to identify DLLs in high-quality Early Learning and Care settings. DLL identification data will allow programs and states 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.
- Incentivize and support States to develop high-quality and culturally competent dual language immersion preschool programs within the State.
- Legislation to establish an asset-based approach for assessing language proficiency of Dual Language Learners while protecting funding for Title III under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended. This includes funding to conduct studies to determine developmentally appropriate assessment tools.
- Provide dedicated funding to support the training, professional development, and postsecondary education for all caregivers, providers, and Early Learning teachers to meet the needs of DLLs, including:
 - dual language acquisition,
 - biliteracy development,
 - engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families,
 - home language support, and
 - culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment of DLLs.



INCREASE COMPENSATION AND TRAINING FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CARE CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS

Recognizing that the Early Learning and Care workforce is predominantly composed of underpaid women, and disproportionately women of color,² teachers and caregivers must receive professional and equitable compensation and benefits that help ensure the recruitment and retention of a quality workforce. All Early Learning and Care teachers and caregivers should have the training and resources they need to meet the educational and developmental needs of the children in their care. They must receive professional development to help them further child development, provide trauma-informed care, and deliver linguistically and culturally competent care that supports the whole child, with the resources necessary to access and pursue these opportunities. These supports are critical to ensuring caregivers and teachers reflect the diverse communities they serve.

Early Edge California Urges Congress to Advance the Following Policy Solutions:

- Dedicated funding to establish pay parity for child care professionals and educators across the Early Learning and Care field and ensure that all receive a livable wage and compensation.
- Policy and dedicated funding to ensure that caregivers and teachers, and particularly caregivers in underserved areas, have access to high-quality professional development and training. This includes providing the supports, financial resources, and incentives that are necessary for caregivers and teachers to pursue and have access to high-quality professional development.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY, FRIEND, AND NEIGHBOR (FFN) PROVIDERS

While FFN care providers, also known as license-exempt care, play a critical role in the mixed-delivery system, they are often overlooked in federal policy. FFN caregivers consist of grandparents, aunts, uncles, extended family, neighbors, and friends who provide care for children in informal settings, typically in their own home. They often work more flexible hours to meet the needs of families who have jobs that require nontraditional hours and/or have multiple jobs to make ends meet. FFNs are also largely women of color and reflect the demographics, language, and culture of the communities they serve. As the predominant form of care in California and the U.S., it is estimated that between one-third to over one-half (33-53 percent of children under 5, and 48-59 percent of school-age children)³ receive care provided by an FFN. FFNs are typically underpaid, often making below minimum wage for the care they provide. Increased federal investment is needed to ensure FFN providers have access to supportive resources and livable wages.



Early Edge California Urges Congress to Advance the Following Policy Solutions:

- Acknowledge that families have different child care needs and that it is important that the mixed-delivery system provides high-quality options that support the needs of all children and families, including access to FFN care.
- Work closely with the Administration to support FFN providers through increased access to wages, professional development, and supportive resources.

¹ "Young Dual Language Learners in the United States and by State," Migration Policy Institute. Link [here](#).

² "Key findings—early childhood workforce index 2020," Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Link [here](#).

³ "Demographics of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care in the United States," National Center for Children in Poverty. Link [here](#).

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