



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Phil Ting
Assemblymember, California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Senator, California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable David Chiu
Assemblymember, California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: San Francisco ECE Communities Letter of Opposition - AB 22

Assemblymember Ting, Senator Scott Wiener and Assemblymember Chiu:

We, the undersigned, are San Francisco early child care educators, parents, child care resource and referral agencies, and child care stakeholders. We are writing to express our opposition surrounding AB 22 (McCarty), which would expand transitional kindergarten to all 4-year-olds. While we appreciate the bill's intent to ensure that children are ready to thrive when they enter the public school system, we believe there are unintended consequences that will arise as a result of implementation of AB 22 that would harm, not help, San Francisco's low-income children and families.

AB 22 decreases State child care funding.

Child Care was significantly cut in the 2008 recession, we just got back to that level of investment in 2017. AB 22 takes funds away from State child care and puts it in Prop 98. Each year since 2011,

child care advocates must fight hard to adequately fund the child care programs cut from Prop. 98. Lawmakers are forced to make difficult decisions on how to balance the many needs and requests —both child care and non-child care related — for how general child care dollars must be spent.

At a time when families and child care providers, particularly people of color, are in crisis and need child care more than ever, the Governor's January 2021 budget proposal allocates no ongoing General Fund money outside of Prop 64 funding for the general child care programs; the very programs that offer the flexible, non-traditional hours families so desperately need.

AB 22 guarantees ongoing General Fund money on top of the already guaranteed General Fund Prop. 98 money that the TK program currently receives. Moreover, this bill adds an additional adjustment for grades 1-3 based on TK pupil enrollment. No general child care program has such significant guaranteed state funding streams. Not only is this provision unfair, it unjustly impacts the many families with limited resources who are already struggling to find affordable child care.

In order to build an equitable child care system, the state must start with allocating significantly more guaranteed, ongoing funding for the most underfunded child care programs — family child care homes, child care centers, and family, friend and neighbor care.

This bill does not address what at-risk children need.

Four-year-old children are not developmentally ready to be in a more traditional elementary school setting or program which would cause multiple transitions and disruptions during the day to move them to other programs to meet the full day needs of their families. Children this age need consistency, attachment and a nurturing environment that can manage not only their early learning, but also their social and emotional development and basic self-regulation skills. To be blunt, these children need naps and care.

This bill does not address if low-income four-year-olds who continue to be eligible for State Preschool or Head Start programs can receive the wraparound services provided through those programs. Wraparound services include counseling, crisis care and outreach, special education services and tutoring, health services, legal services, and family support. We are concerned that eligible students and families who are placed into transitional kindergarten, who need these services the most, will not have access to them.

Additionally, this bill does not fully address the training requirements that K-12 teachers will need to serve 4-year-olds. While the bill does contain a requirement for teachers to receive training in early education, the 24 units as required by AB 22 cannot compare to the extensive training like teachers in Head Start programs undergo to qualify as a teacher.

For example, Head Start teachers must have a *minimum* of a Child Development Associate's Degree or equivalent credential *and* have been trained in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development.

This bill does not address what parents need to work.

In this plan low income parents only have ONE free option. Yet, the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care calls for 4 key objectives—one is to ensure “that all families can identify and access a variety of early learning and care choices that fit the diverse needs of their children, their financial resources, and workday and nonstandard schedules.”

AB 22 creates a system that does not provide families a selection of quality programs that meet their child and family needs. It creates a system that will exacerbate a system of inequity and social injustice

Families should be allowed as many affordable child care options as possible to fit their needs and preferences like the SF “preschool for all” model which gives parents lots of choices. Many parents with 2 or more children usually want their care to be together, and we have many multi-age settings in current programs.

When parents are offered a free TK option, many must make the hard decision about whether to keep their child in a setting where they are thriving or uproot their child to a school setting they may not be ready for. The typical 3-hour per day TK program, Monday through Friday, forces parents to figure out how they can cobble together various forms of child care to make this free option work for them. Trying to figure out how to make a part-time TK schedule accommodate their work schedule or not being able to work at all because of lack of affordable child care options are major stressors on a parent. Children internalize this stress, which often directly impacts their well-being and academic success.

AB 22 does not require transitional kindergarten to provide a full-day and full year program, nor does it ensure students who attend transitional kindergarten will have access to full-day programs, as recommended in the Blue Ribbon Commission Report. *Yet this is what parents need.* For parents to work, they need childcare options that are flexible and convenient for families and that meet their individual needs. Overnight grocery store workers will need a different schedule than those who work in offices or retail stores during daytime hours – none of these schedules that include nights, weekends and 10-hour work days align with the typical ‘K-12 school’ day. Family work schedules in California are just as diverse as our population.

The early learning and care system cannot survive an expansion of TK.

Expanding TK will create challenges for a system already taxed by the pandemic. *Almost 7,000 family child care homes shut their doors between March and December, 2,443 permanently, according to the California Department of Social Services.*

TK Expansion will drain an already lean workforce. This bill would create the need for more qualified early care teachers who are already difficult to recruit and retain, partly due to an underfunded system that undervalues and underpays the workforce. In addition, school districts, which typically pay higher wages, will attract qualified teachers, and thus deepen the staffing crisis for non-LEA based providers.

Sincerely,

San Francisco Childcare Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC)

San Francisco ECE Advocacy Coalition

C5 Children's School

Children's Council of San Francisco

City College of San Francisco

Cross Cultural Family Center

ECESF

FCCASF

Friends of St. Francis Childcare Center

Felton Institute

Good Samaritan Family Resource Center

Kai Ming Head Start

Low Income Investment Fund

Parent Voices San Francisco

Wah Mei School

Wu Yee Children's Services