



## AB 904 –Expanding Child Care Access for Families in Transition

### SUMMARY

AB 904 updates California's subsidized child care eligibility criteria to reflect the real-life needs of families. Specifically, the bill ensures that parents who are searching for employment, on pregnancy-related leave, or on paid family leave can continue to access child care. These changes provide clarity in state law, support maternal health, reduce child care disruptions, and promote long-term economic stability for working families.

### BACKGROUND

The Child Care and Development Services Act provides subsidized child care to eligible families, but existing law defines a "workday" too narrowly—primarily linking access to employment or vocational training. This definition does not reflect the realities of modern family needs.

Research from the National Women's Law Center and other institutions highlights how lack of access to child care during job searches, pregnancy recovery, or family caregiving forces parents—especially single mothers—to make impossible choices between health, family, and financial stability. These gaps disproportionately impact low-income families, exacerbating economic and racial inequities.

### PROBLEM

Current law excludes key transitional periods from the definition of a "workday"—including job searching, pregnancy-related recovery, and family leave. This gap results in the sudden loss of child care just when families need it most, increasing maternal stress, delaying workforce reentry, and disrupting continuity of care for children.

Parents on family or medical leave are often forced to withdraw their children from care temporarily—only to

face waitlists or lose their care provider entirely upon returning to work.

### THIS BILL

AB 904 revises and clarifies eligibility for subsidized child care by:

- Clarifying that the definition of "workday" to include:
  - Job search activities,
  - Pregnancy-related leave, and
  - Paid family leave for caring for a family member.
- Updating the definition of "parental incapacity" to reflect temporary conditions such as recovery from childbirth.
- Allowing parents to sign an attestation form confirming they are on qualifying leave, rather than requiring burdensome medical documentation.

By providing much needed clarity, the bill promotes economic stability, workforce participation, maternal and child well-being, and prevents unnecessary disruptions in child care.

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### SUPPORT

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