

Good afternoon, Chair and Members.

My name is Melanie Dodson, and I am the Executive Director of 4Cs of Sonoma County. Since 1972, 4Cs has worked to ensure that every child in Sonoma County has access to the care and early education they need to thrive. Every day, we sit with families who are working, seeking stability, and trying to do right by their children. Our role is to help them navigate a system that too often is more complex than it needs to be.

One of the greatest challenges we encounter is not a lack of commitment or effort, but a system that is misaligned with how families actually live their lives. Voucher-based child care programs are structured around 24-month eligibility and 24-month contracts for agencies. This is a thoughtful and important policy design that promotes stability and continuity of care for children. However, the way these contracts are administered today does not fully recognize the realities on the ground.

Families do not enter the system neatly at the start of a fiscal year. They come to us every day throughout the year, often in moments of urgency. Utilization is based on a family's need, and as a result, enrollment happens on a rolling basis. Families are at different points in their eligibility. Care needs shift due to work, housing, life changes, and children's ages. Yet agencies are required to manage funding within rigid fiscal structures that do not align with this reality or account for constantly changing circumstances.

This misalignment is not theoretical—it is happening right now in Sonoma County. In September of the current fiscal year, our agency identified that we were projected to run out of funding under our contract. As a community-based nonprofit, we made the responsible decision to stabilize services for families who were already enrolled, but the consequences were profound. We have not enrolled a single new family since the fall. There are now over 2,000 children on our waitlist, and many working families have been unable to access care. Our staff are forced to turn families away.

At the same time, other agencies serving Sonoma County have available funds. Those funds could have been shifted to cover the shortfall and serve families immediately, but the system did not allow this to happen in a reasonable or seamless way. This creates an untenable situation where families remain unserved, our agency is constrained, and available funds in the county sit unused. This is not a funding problem—it is a systems problem.

AB 2314 is a critical step toward correcting this misalignment. The bill recognizes that child care voucher programs are not static; they are living systems that must respond to families in real time. Contracts must be administered in a way that reflects rolling enrollment and allows for timely flexibility by aligning policy with practice.

AB 2314 would allow agencies like ours to enroll families as needs arise, ensure continuity of care, reduce unnecessary administrative burden, and maximize every available dollar to serve families. Most importantly, it would prevent situations like the one in Sonoma County, where families are turned away while allocated funds remain unspent.

We are proud to be part of a system that lifts up families and supports our local workforce. We have the expertise and capacity to deliver the expanded services requested of us by the Legislature and the Governor. But right now, the system is asking us to make impossible choices.

AB 2314 helps shift the focus where it belongs—from navigating bureaucracy to lifting up families. We respectfully urge your support.

Good afternoon, Chair and Members.

My name is Adonai Mack, and I am the CEO of Child Action in Sacramento County. I want to thank Assemblymember Rogers for your leadership on this bill—we believe it is critically important.

This month, Child Action celebrates 50 years of serving the Sacramento community. Over that time, we have worked to connect families with the child care they need, and today we reach more than 34,000 children, parents, and child care providers annually. Our goal is simple: to help families access care so parents can go to work, because quality child care impacts every industry across our county and region.

Earlier this year, we faced the potential of having to disenroll over 1,000 children and families who were eligible for our program and already receiving care. Due to structural issues in the system, they were at risk of losing continuity of care. This situation made clear that even when everyone is working in good faith—our team, providers, and staff—the system itself can create instability.

At its core, the issue is how the system operates. It can leave funds unspent while families remain on a waiting list. In our case, that waitlist includes more than 5,000 children and families. At the same time, the system can disrupt continuity of care for those already enrolled.

This is not about a lack of funding. The Legislature has made important investments in child care. The issue is ensuring those dollars reach families when they need them. Right now, the system is not consistently doing that.

We believe AB 2314 improves alignment, protects continuity of care, and increases transparency. When families lose access to child care, parents cannot work—and that has real consequences for our economy.

We respectfully ask for your support for AB 2314. Thank you.