



SB 421 Children's Cabinet of California

PURPOSE

SB 421 would establish the Children's Cabinet of California. The Children's Cabinet membership would be made up of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, and the head of each agency and department within the state that provides services for or has jurisdiction over the well-being of children. The Children's Cabinet would facilitate information sharing, collaboration, increased efficiency, and improved service delivery among the State's child-serving agencies, departments, and organizations.

BACKGROUND

California is home to over 9 million children. While child welfare has always been a priority for the State of California, we still have among the worst outcomes for children in health, education, and juvenile justice:

- Only 49% of all 3- and 4- year-olds in California attend preschool;
- California ranks 41st in per-student spending;
- California ranks near the bottom nationally for performance in reading (40th), math (40th), and science (42nd);
- California ranks 43rd for the rate of young kids receiving developmental screenings (21%);
- California ranks among the bottom 2 states for Medicaid provider rates affecting accessibility and quality of care for children;
- Only 50% of children on Denti-Cal receive annual visits;

- More than 20% of California's children are food insecure and California ranks among the bottom of the 50 states in federal SNAP participation;
- Half of the kids in California foster care have endured four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which are more likely to lead to chronic disease in adulthood; and
- Youth of color are over-represented in the juvenile justice system.¹

We have multiple state agencies and departments (e.g. CDE, HHS, SCR, DSS, DHCS, CDPH, etc.) providing direct services that aim to alleviate these challenges and yet, we have not seen the needle move on these measures of child well-being. This can be attributed to many challenges including, lack of public awareness of major children's issues, lack of coordination among state agencies, and challenges with delivery of services through local levels of government. California needs to facilitate a holistic approach to serving children through the establishment of a Children's Cabinet. A Children's Cabinet made up of key agency leaders can help mobilize efforts and resources around the Governor's priorities for children and improve efficiency in service delivery across state and local departments. A concerted effort to develop a children's policy agenda focused on cultivating cross-sector systems of care that address the whole child is essential.

The National Governors Association considers Children's Cabinets a best practice and has set forth guiding principles for establishing a Children's Cabinet.²

¹ 2018 California Children's Report Card (Children Now)
<https://www.childrennow.org/portfolio-posts/18reportcard/>

² A Governor's Guide to Children's Cabinets:
<https://nwi.pdx.edu/pdf/ChildrensCabinet-NatGovernorsAssoc.pdf>

SUMMARY

SB 421 would establish the Children’s Cabinet to develop a shared vision among the branches of government in order to improve child and family outcomes in California. This bill would also help break down the silos and gaps that exist between the State’s child-serving agencies and help them work in a coordinated fashion, with an emphasis on providing a continuum of services that benefit children.

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