

AB 1073 (Berman)

Early Childhood Education Workforce Waiver

SUMMARY

AB 1073 would remove a financial barrier and incentivize Californians to join the Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce. Specifically, this bill would establish the Early Childhood Education Workforce Waiver to provide a fee waiver for eight ECE courses for community college students with 12 declared majors related to ECE and child development.

BACKGROUND

California is experiencing a growing shortage of early childhood educators which has worsened since the pandemic. This shortage is driven by unlivable wages. According to the Center of the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley (Center), the majority of the ECE workforce lives in poverty. In 2018, 58 percent of California's child care workforce participated in one or more public income support programs. In 2020, the Center reported that early childhood educators experience poverty at eight times the rate as K-8 teachers. As a result, turnover rates for early childhood educators in recent years have exceeded 50 percent. In recent surveys, nearly 70 percent of respondents reported greater difficulty hiring now than before COVID-19. This pandemic has both revealed and exacerbated the chronic underfunding of this sector which disproportionately impacts women and people of color.

Even with existing financial aid programs, workers entering the ECE field are often left with student debt. The majority of ECE students come from underserved populations that are at higher risk of failing to navigate financial aid resources. Of California's center-based ECE workforce, half are English Language Learners, over 50 percent live in poverty, and 55 percent are people of color.

Tuition for ECE courses is cost prohibitive for many prospective and current early childhood educators. According to a recent survey, early childhood educators report that the biggest barrier to professional development was the cost of tuition or training expenses. The average annual cost of tuition at community colleges in California is \$6,042 which is 25% of the median annual wage of \$24,150 for ECE professionals in the state. Nearly one-third of participants in a recent ECE community college course reported household incomes of \$25,000 or less and identified the program's free tuition as the most important factor in facilitating their enrollment. Especially in high-cost-of-living areas (where the ECE workforce shortage is acute) early childhood educators are often unable to pursue college as full-time students, which is a requirement to access some existing financial aid programs.

The pandemic showed that the ECE workforce is vital and without affordable, quality care and education, economic

recovery efforts will be compromised. Both attracting and investing in this critical ECE workforce will be even more important post COVID-19. Even before the pandemic, the shortage of child care was a drain on California's economy with businesses losing approximately \$638 million annually due to employee absences resulting from breakdowns in child care arrangements. Lack of child care has caused roughly 3 million nationwide to leave the workforce since March 2020, leaving women's labor force participation at a 33 year low with the greatest impact born by women of color.

THIS BILL

In order to increase access to and the quality of ECE, California must address the workforce shortage which has only gotten worse as a result of the pandemic. AB 1073 would establish the Early Childhood Education Workforce Waiver to provide a fee waiver for eight specified ECE courses for community college students with 12 declared majors related to ECE and child development as outlined in the bill.

The eight courses that are eligible for the fee waiver include:

1. Child Growth and Development
2. Child, Family and Community
3. Introduction to Curriculum
4. Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
5. Observation and Assessment
6. Health, Safety and Nutrition
7. Teaching in a Diverse Society
8. Practicum

These courses have been identified by the California Community Colleges Curriculum Alignment Project as the eight evidence-

based courses that are intended to become a foundational core for all early care and education professionals.

This bill would remove a financial barrier and provide an incentive for Californians to enter the ECE workforce with the goal of increasing access to high-quality ECE for California's children. The pandemic has only exacerbated the existing shortage and amplified the need for immediate support and investment in the ECE workforce, which is essential to California's economic recovery.

SUPPORT

Community Equity Collaborative (sponsor)

OPPOSITION

None on File

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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