



Children's ADVOCATE



PUBLISHED BY ACTION ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN



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June 8 ballot propositions

Proposition 14: Change to primaries

This measure would allow people to vote for any state or congressional candidate in the primary elections, regardless of party. The two candidates with the most votes would run against each other in November.

Support

"Prop. 14 will push our elected officials to begin working together for the common good," says a California Chamber of Commerce statement. Prop. 14 would

- Put more moderate politicians in office
- Reduce budget stalemates
- Cut down on runoff elections.

Supporters: California Chamber of Commerce, Latin Business Association, AARP

Contact: Californians for an Open Primary, www.yeson14openprimary.com

Opposition

"[Prop. 14] would cost more to implement—money that could be better spent on children's programs," says Dave Low of the California School Employees Association. Prop. 14 would

- Increase the cost of campaigns, because candidates would have to reach out to all voters during the primaries

- Make it more difficult for third-party candidates to get elected
- Not have an effect on getting more moderate politicians in office.

Opponents: California School Employees Association, California State Firefighters, United Nurses Association

Contact: California School Employees Union, 916-329-3621

Proposition 17: Auto insurance

This measure would allow companies to offer auto insurance discounts to new customers who have continuously maintained their insurance coverage. Currently, customers lose this discount if they switch insurance companies.

Support

"Prop. 17 would make [a current] discount portable [when] drivers switch insurance companies. Families could save up to \$250," says Kathy Fairbanks of the Yes on 17 campaign. Prop. 17 would

- Allow insurers to offer an additional discount
- Lower insurance rates
- Continue to base auto insurance rates primarily on drivers' safety record, how many miles they drive a year, and driving experience, as required by current law.

Supporters: Mercury Insurance, California Chamber of Commerce, California Taxpayer Protection Committee

Contact: Californians for Fair Auto Insurance Rates, www.cal-fair.org

Opposition

"If a family is struggling and misses a single payment, [their auto insurance rates could go up] 40-220%. Families would be choosing between really basic needs for their kids and having a car," says Naomi Seligman of Consumer Watchdog. Prop. 17 would

- Charge customers more when they have a gap in their coverage.
- Undermine current law, which does not allow companies to set rates based on whether a customer had a prior policy.

OPPONENTS: Consumer Watchdog, Consumer Federation of California, Vote Vets

Contact: Stop the Surcharge, www.stopprop17.org

For more election info:

- California Easy Voter Guide, www.easyvoter.org
- Smart Voter, from the California League of Women Voters, www.smartvoter.org

More news on p. 12

ACTION ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN (AAC), publisher of the *Children's Advocate*, is a nonprofit dedicated to informing and empowering people who work with and on behalf of children. AAC is supported in part by a California Department of Education (CDE) grant.

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THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE is published bimonthly by AAC. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of CDE and opinions expressed by contributors or writers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of this paper. We reserve the right to refuse advertising for any reason.

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Publication Design and Production lockwood design

Printing Fricke Parks Press

Circulation: *Children's Advocate* is available at select child care centers, social service organizations, and public libraries throughout California. Available by bulk order or individual subscription. **For subscription info, call 510.444.7136.**

© Children's Advocate Newsmagazine ASSN 0739-45X
Next Issue: Summer 2010 ■ Printed on recycled paper

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Greenfield parents bring community together to improve park

By Nicole Moreno

The Greenfield Walking Group is making Stiern Park more “family-friendly.” Before the group got involved, “it wasn’t safe enough to let [your child] go to the playground while you got exercise,” says Maria Zecua, mother of two.

Zecua and other parents joined the Walking Group to make the park better and safer for families. With support from the Kern County Network of Children (KCNC), the group has built a new walking path, helped youth get a new playground, and had the city add better lighting and safety measures.

NEW LIGHTS TURNED ON: KCNC provided leadership classes and asked parents to run their own community meeting. Parents met with the park supervisor about more lighting so they could play soccer at night. “Two weeks later, [there were] huge floodlights in the soccer area!” says Jennifer Lopez, Healthy Living Outreach Facilitator for Get Moving Kern/KCNC.

COLLABORATION WITH CITY OFFICIALS: Parents worked with the Recreation and Parks Department to “construct a walking path and the playground,” says Director Dianne Hoover. The water department also fenced off an unsafe area.

Group members met with the police about patrolling more, says Maria Sanchez, a grandmother of three. Parents wrote letters to the mayor and took him on a tour of the park.

\$10,000 FOR A WALKING PATH: Parents conducted an assessment about problems in the park and presented it to the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber provided \$10,000 for the walking path, media contacts, and volunteers to help build the path. The walking group also helped youth find funding for a new playground.

WIDE-SPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE: The group has been featured on *Univisión* and National Public Radio, as well as *El Popular* Newspaper and Channel 23 News, says Lopez. Local radio and television stations sent volunteers to help at the park.



Volunteers build the walking path at Stiern Park

KERN COUNTY NETWORK FOR CHILDREN

VOLUNTEERS PITCH IN: Parents organized a work day in April to build the walking path. They passed out fliers and recruited parents at the park. 100 parents and volunteers helped build the walking path, recalls Lopez. In May, the walking group held a work day and celebration after the new playground was installed. Youth worked with city staff to pick up trash, replace old trash cans, and plant shrubs.

SUPPORT TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: “We have given other groups ideas and support,” says Sanchez. Inspired by the walking group, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has funded parent advocacy classes throughout the Central Valley, says Lopez.

PARK USAGE TRIPLES: “[Now] neighbors set up their own volleyball, soccer, and aerobics,” says Lopez. “Night-time usage at the park has tripled. The new problem is that there is not enough space [for] all of the physical activity!” Parents are also looking for funding to put in a restroom.

“[I learned] we are not alone,” adds Zecua. “We can count on other people and institutions to help us, especially about the safety of our children. Sometimes we don’t know we matter.”

For more information, contact Get Moving Kern/KCNC, 661-205-3743



Campaign fights proposed state budget cuts

By Julieta Santana

People around the state are mobilizing to “preserve and protect state programs from budget cuts” as part of the California Partnership’s BOLT campaign, says Campaign Coordinator Kim Kruckel.

The campaign is calling on legislators to enact a “California Recovery Plan” that would create and preserve jobs, preserve the safety net for families, and maximize federal dollars. “The campaign is working with legislators who want to find budget solutions, and not rely only on cuts,” she adds.

The Budget Organizing Leadership Team (BOLT) campaign is developing 200 grassroots leaders in 12 organizations around the state—including child care, community, and immigrant groups. These leaders will be “like lightning bolts...poised to testify, speak with the media, mobilize their communities to have a say in the budget process,” says Kruckel.

Looming budget cuts

California faces a \$20 billion budget deficit. “Half of the funds” to close the gap could “come from [cuts to] programs for the poorest people in the state,” says Kruckel.

Campaign pushes for change

MORE STATE REVENUES—by expanding the sales tax to more products, reinstating top income tax brackets, and closing corporate loopholes. See “10 Ways to Raise \$20 billion,” from the California Tax Reform Association, <http://caltaxreform.org/?p=211>

PASSING STATE BUDGETS WITH A SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE—the legislature is considering a measure for the November ballot. Californians for Democracy is collecting signatures for a similar measure, <https://salsa.wiredforchange.com/o/6110>



100 BOLT campaign members hold a press conference on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in January

“[But] economic security and stability in the community is one of the most important things we can give a child,” she adds.

Threatened programs include Healthy Families, CalWORKs, and CalWORKs child care (see p.12). These cuts would also come at a time when an increasing number of families are enrolling in safety net programs because of the recession, says a recent California Budget Project report.

Campaign off to strong start

Partner organizations held press events in 11 cities around the state to kick off the campaign. Parents and community members testified about how proposed cuts would hurt children and families (see box, p.5). They ran the events, did press interviews, and encouraged more people to join.

The campaign also held a press event at Senator Feinstein’s office, asking her to support legislation that would continue subsidized job programs for families on CalWORKs. After the meeting, says Kruckel, Senator Feinstein signed onto a Senate support letter.

Parents plan to meet with legislators—many of whom also oppose the cuts. “When you cut child care in a recession, you eliminate the ability for parents to work and pursue education,” says Assemblymember Sandré Swanson (D-Oakland). “For families to survive, we

Take action for kids

BOLT Action days in Sacramento. April 26 and 27. For more information, contact Astrid Campos, 213-385-8010 (for more advocacy events, see p.12)

For more information about the campaign, contact Kim Kruckel, California Partnership, 510-301-1456, kkruckel@communitychange.org or visit www.california-partnership.org

should be increasing funding for child care. I've said to parents, 'Continue your advocacy. It's important for you to speak out.'"

"California is the wealthiest state, but state investment in children is so low," adds Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny (D-San Diego). "The more people who are active, the better the [budget] dialogue will be."

Action for children and families

"I am single mother [with] four children," says Fremont mom Gina Jackson—"two in public schools, [two] uninsured [college] students. One has a disability." She is active with Parent Voices and MomsRising—"it was a relief to find other parents like me," she recalls. "I'm not the only one suffering and struggling."

Jackson attends legislative hearings, passes out flyers, and goes to "any rally she can, whether child care, health care, disability, or education." Her story is an effective tool for talking to legislators, she says, because her family feels the cuts on different levels.

"[The state has] cut some of the food program, transportation for people seeking jobs," adds Gloria Roberts, a Compton mother of four and family child care provider. She recently became an activist through the Child Care Workers Alliance (CCWA)—now she hosts meetings on the cutbacks and budget proposals.

"Every year child care or [other programs are] on the chopping block," adds Bellflower family child care provider Tonia McMillan, who has attended CCWA leadership trainings. "I'm not going to sit with my mouth closed as the budget gets cut. No more!"

Mobilizing communities

Children's advocacy organizations are partnering with community and immigrant rights organizations "to build collective power for families in communities," adds Kruckel.

Partner organizations held trainings to get people ready for budget activism in January and February. For exam-

ple, *Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaca* in Fresno held teach-ins on the state budget at its five offices. The teach-ins "explain things so people think '[the budget] is important and can affect me.' I encourage people in my neighborhood to attend," says Fresno mom Virginia Velazquez.

Speaking out

The California Partnership and other organizations are holding community forums in several cities in March, which will be attended by local legislators. The campaign will also mobilize people to attend budget hearings and action days in Sacramento. Events might include "Budget Bake Sales and Mock Child Care Centers to highlight the impact of the cuts," says Kruckel.

"I would like to say to legislators: '[The cuts will] worsen our society,'" says Velazquez. "[Uninsured] children will get sick more often, miss more school. What future [will our children] have if these programs are cut?"

Meeting legislators can be the most powerful part of being involved, adds Jackson. "I bring pictures of my children. Look at my children's beautiful eyes. They want a future and you're cutting child care. You want them to go home by themselves! Not my child!"

How budget cuts hurt families

"Can you imagine not having \$300 worth of food?" asks Gina Jackson, a Fremont mother of four. "My son smashed his finger in the door, and we're going to have [to come up with \$300] to pay for that." Jackson worries that budget cuts to basic services would hurt more families.

Fresno mom Virginia Velazquez says her seven-year-old daughter could lose her low-cost state health insurance if Healthy Families' income requirements are changed so that fewer families qualify. "[Now] we pay \$21 monthly and a \$10 copayment. When she needed stitches, we didn't have to worry about the hospital bill." But it would cost \$480 a month to add her daughter to her work's health care plan. "We don't know where the money [would] come from," she says. Her husband, a farm worker, already has no health insurance.

Tonia McMillan, a Bellflower family child care provider, worries about cuts to CalWORKs child care funding. "Where does my [client who is a] single mother with four kids go? She'll have to drop out of school, and it will cut my program in half. [And] the kids here are learning—we are doing such valuable work."



Infants and toddlers learn to help others, with guidance from teachers

By Jean Tepperman

Recent research shows babies are born with empathy, and one-year-olds have an impulse to help. But infants and toddlers also “are really into themselves,” says Mayra Moreno, a Riverside County family child care provider—which can make it harder for them to learn pro-social behavior like helpfulness and cooperation.

“We lay the foundations,” says Monique Paige, who teaches infant/toddler development at Saddleback College in Orange County. “If a baby is crying, [a toddler] may give her a hug, a toy. You can reinforce that: ‘Look how happy you made her feel.’”

Prosocial skills are “the number one gift you can give a child,” adds Shawn Norman, who teaches 18-month-olds at Orange Coast College Children’s Center. Other skills are “not going to do you [as] much good if you can’t relate to other people.”

Fill a bucket with kindness

Inspired by a children’s book that changed her philosophy—*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*—Riverside County family child care provider Sarah Mosley made the “bucket” concept a central part of her program. “Everyone comes with an invisible bucket. When you’re kind you’re filling the bucket. When you’re mean, you’re dipping into the bucket,” she says.

“Children say, ‘I filled Jenny’s bucket—I tied her shoe.’ ‘You dipped into my bucket—you took my toy.’ We have lots of visual reminders, buckets to take home.” At family nights, people share “bucket-filling” stories.

“Now there’s less fighting, children self-regulate,” she adds. “It changed [how] staff relate to each other. When we model, children can do it.”



It starts with the caregiver

For babies, says Norman, “the caregiver is the curriculum.”

A baby “learns to interact positively with others...[and] form positive relationships with peers,” from early interactions with consistent caregivers who are nurturing, says Jean Barbre of the Orange County Office of Education.

In Moreno’s family child care home, “there are lots of pillows, lots of touching and hugging,” she says. On a recent rainy day, the children “had breakfast on the couch under a blanket.” Then they talk about what they will do that day. “It reduces anxiety,” she adds.

“Be aware of your expectation level” about how children learn pro-social skills, cautions Paige. “If you show them how to pet the cat nicely, tomorrow you’ll have to show them again. Eventually they will internalize it.”

Build sharing into the routine

In Norman’s toddler classroom, “our routines are very social,” she says. Children help at family-style meals: “I see Tiffany is here—let’s give Tiffany a plate.”

Toys encourage cooperation, including “trikes two kids can ride and games like matching cards or playing ball,” Norman adds. Teachers also watch closely and

prompt: “When you’re done with that, Alicia would like a turn. Please let Alicia know when you’re finished.’ They remember and hand it to her,” she adds.

Children even work together on art pieces. “Someone is doing a painting and someone else paints a big green stripe on it. I’ll say, ‘Hey, you guys are working together!’” If the first child objected, Norman adds, she would protect the painting, “but at this age that hasn’t happened.”

Model empathy and cooperation

If a child is crying because his block structure was knocked down, “I say ‘I understand you’re upset. Maybe I can be your friend and help build it up again. Who wants to help?’” says Moreno. When a child building a house for animals declared, “‘I really need the zebra,’ we all helped look for the zebra,” she says.

When children bite, adds Norman, “we sit really close and say, ‘Look at Brian’s face. He looks so sad.’ You can see wheels turning in their head. I hug Brian, and say, ‘I’m really sorry you’re hurt.’ We do lots of theatrics. [Children] are intently looking at our reactions. It’s important for us to be really calm.”

Do it together

With toddlers, says Paige, “instructions don’t work. You have to be working alongside them: ‘We put blue blocks here and yellow blocks there.’ Children love to help. Have them do it with another friend” to get children used to working together.

“We let children know we value their help,” adds Norman. “‘Let’s do this together!’ ‘Thank you for helping.’ By age two or three it becomes their idea to cooperate.”

Help handle problems

When a child grabs a toy from another, says Norman, “we help the child hand it back: ‘They’re not done with it, you can use this one now and use that one when they’re done.’” The child who grabbed may cry and scream, she adds, but “soon they’ll stop and move on.” Eventually they’ll learn to say, “I’d like to use that when you’re done.”

You can show children “how to make amends,” says Paige, by suggesting a pat on the back or giving the toy back—but toddlers don’t know what “I’m sorry” means.

Provide language

Moreno helps children learn words to describe their feelings: “I know you’re upset. It’s hard to be away from your family.” This tells them, “I pay attention, you are valued.” She also expresses pro-social values: “It’s nice having friends, being part of a group.”

Recently, Moreno recalls, Rosie snatched a new doll from Elena. Moreno suggested they play together, but Rosie ran away with the doll. “I said to Elena, ‘Let’s go talk to her.’ I’m going to be there, not to solve the problem, but as a support.”

Young children show empathy

- ❖ Newborns imitate facial expressions—which means they map expressions to feelings.
- ❖ One-year-olds understand the difference between intentional and unintentional actions, and behave in “genuinely altruistic” ways.
- ❖ When children see someone express sadness or try to pull apart a tube, they show empathy—feeling sad or trying to help with the tube.
- ❖ A series of studies showed fourteen-month-olds try hard to help—climbing over cushions to get a pen for someone, getting upset when others are in pain, but also trying to help.

Source: *The Philosophical Baby*, by Alison Gopnik, 2009.

For more research:

- ❖ **Pro-social development research** by Ross Thompson, UC Davis, <http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/faculty/Thompson/pubs.cfm>
- ❖ **Social development research** by Michael Tomasello, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, <http://email.eva.mpg.de/~tomas/>

For additional resources:

- ❖ **Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations**, Social-Emotional Development Domain, from the California Department of Education, www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/itf09_socemodev.asp
- ❖ **Training module for infant/toddler caregivers**, from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning, www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/resources/training_infant.html
- ❖ **Zero to Three**, www.zerotothree.org
Respecting Babies, by Ruth Anne Hammond
Focusing on Peers, by Donna Wittmer
- ❖ **Fill A Bucket**, by Carol McCloud and Kathy Martin (*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* for younger children)

By Abbie Mood

I knew [my daughter] had speech delays,” recalls Corona mom Dawn Fikse. “She wasn’t using a large variety of words. In a Mommy and Me class, she was not playing with the toys like other children. [Instead] she would run from one table to the next.”

What should parents do when they suspect their child has special needs? Parents and experts agree it is key to make sure young children get the services and support they need.

Have your child assessed

“My pediatrician would always dismiss my concerns,” says Fikse, “but my sister noticed [my daughter’s] speech delays as well and told me to call [the Regional Center].” The Regional Center arranged for specialists to do an assessment of her daughter at home (see box, p.9). They found her daughter had significant speech delays and possibly Sensory Integration Disorder (diffi-

culty processing input from their senses) and was eligible for special needs services.

Now “she is getting the detailed attention she needs,” says Fikse, in a school district-run preschool program with additional support from specialists. When her daughter was 3 years old, the school district also coordinated an Individualized Education Plan (IEP, see box, p. 9) which helped her track what specialists were working on with her daughter. “I can see which goals we have been working on for a while [and] want to try a new approach with,” adds Fikse.

Parents can ask questions at any point during an assessment or IEP, adds Maria Gutierrez, a mom also in Corona. She requested an interpreter at IEP meetings and that documents be translated into Spanish.

Find care that helps your child thrive

When deciding on a preschool program for her daughter, Fikse says she looked for “genuine concern from the teacher [and] how easy is it to communicate. I always felt comfortable calling the teacher [at my daughter’s program] and voicing any concerns.”

Parents should ask teachers about their background and training, the other students in the class, and whether their child will be challenged enough, adds Nancy Muratella whose son has speech delays and other special needs.

Joining a parent co-op was a “great experience” for Cindy Arstein-Kerslake, a mom in San Marcos and now Coordinator of Map to Inclusive Child Care. Her daughter, Sara, has a developmental disability and the co-op helped Sara get to know other children in the neighborhood. “The parents who helped with the co-op consulted with me about [how] Sara could be included. They changed her diaper, carried her [on] field trips that required lots of walking,” adds Arstein-Kerslake.

Some parents care for their child at home when it becomes too impossible to juggle work, their child’s care, appointments with specialists, and follow-up activities with their child. Jennifer Kossler, a mom in Corona, quit her job because that made it easier “to be involved and really help my son,” but the family cut back on expenses to make it work.

You have the right to...

- ❖ Have your child assessed (in his or her native language or mode of communication) if you suspect he or she has special needs.
- ❖ Ask for an independent assessment if you disagree with the school district’s assessment.
- ❖ Request an IEP meeting—or IFSP meeting, if your child is under age 3—at any time to discuss concerns or progress (see box, p. 9).
- ❖ Have an interpreter at IEP meetings.
- ❖ Participate in any decision-making meeting about your child’s special education program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/fp



KIDANGO

Follow up at home

“We really depended on the teacher’s guidance to help us at home,” says Muratella. When Muratella asked for advice on helping her son learn to play and share with other children, the teacher suggested walking him through how to introduce himself and ask if he can join in play. The teacher also passed on tips about positive reinforcement and redirecting negative behavior. This helped Muratella shift her parenting strategy so her son could develop more confidence—and not feel like he was always being told “No! Slow down! Stop!” she adds.

“Our big goal right now has been for [my daughter] to write her name,” adds Fikse. “The teacher is always telling me activities [for her] to do at home for practice. [My daughter] can now write the first three letters of her name ‘Del’—until recently, she could barely draw a circle.”

Advocate for your child

“You are your child’s advocate,” says Fikse. “Make sure your child is getting the services you think they need.” She recalls when her daughter needed a therapy assessment and the teacher contacted her because it was not being done. The teacher told Fikse that her daughter’s therapist was not responding to the teacher’s calls or emails and asked Fikse to get involved. Fikse contacted the Program Specialist who coordinates her child’s care about the problem and “we finally saw answers,” she adds.

Talk with the teacher about any questions or concerns, advises Arstein-Kerslake. “When you’ve built a relationship, people are willing to work with you. Don’t be afraid to ask or be firm with your requests. Demand your rights if nothing else works,” she adds (see box, p. 8).

“Families [need to] link up with information and support as early as possible,” adds Nina Boyle of Support for

Children with Disabilities. “There are people to talk with [families] about their concerns and [help them find] out what is available for their child in the community.”

Support agencies can also help families with concerns, including discrimination. Staff at Support for Children with Disabilities hears from families that their children of color are being disproportionately referred for special education, says Boyle. “We also hear from families that they feel their child was not identified earlier due to a language barrier. Support agencies can work with parents about how to effectively communicate with professionals working with them and their child,” she adds.

For more information

- ❖ **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** provides in-home support for children with special needs under age 3, coordinated by Regional Centers. www.dds.ca.gov/RC/RCSvs.cfm
- ❖ **Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** provides support for children with special needs age 3 and older, coordinated by school districts. Parents, teachers, and specialists meet at least once a year about how the child is doing, goals for the year, and the free supports and accommodations provided by the school district.

But not all children qualify for an IEP—children must be US citizens and in an early childhood program run by the school district. Other early childhood programs do not provide an IEP, but they must make “reasonable accommodations” for children and may refer families to services in the community. www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/fp

Support organizations

- ❖ **Regional Centers** offer advice and free services for families of children with special needs. They can also connect families with other special needs organizations in their area. Regional Centers are part of the California Department of Developmental Services, 916-654-1690, www.dds.ca.gov/RC/RCList.cfm
- ❖ **California Map to Inclusive Child Care** provides resources about choosing care, 760-682-0271, www.cainclusivechildcare.org/camap

Parents and ECE teachers campaign for child care funding

By Amanda Montague

Parents and teachers are reaching out to legislators about the need to save key child care programs from budget cuts. “People think someone else is going to [advocate for these programs]—but if you don’t get involved no one else will,” says Jackie Buitrago, the Parent Voices organizer in Sonoma and mother of three.

The Governor’s budget proposes to eliminate child care subsidies for parents formerly on CalWORKs (Stage 3) and make steep cuts to other programs for children and families (see p.12). Proposals in the budget and legislature to divert First 5 funds to other state programs have also led the First 5 Commission to hold off on approving a new program (CARES Plus) that would help early care and education teachers and providers go back to school.

Parent Voices members and California Child Development Corps participants are speaking out about these programs, organizing meetings with legislators about the need to support families and teachers, and getting more people involved in advocacy.

Child care keeps parents working

If the state eliminates Stage 3 child care, Buitrago would lose her child care subsidy. But she can’t afford to pay for child care on her own. And without child



Jackie Buitrago with her three children

care, “I would lose my [job], which I’ve been at for five years,” she says. “[Then] I’m really afraid my family would become homeless because we wouldn’t be able to pay the rent. [And we would] be more of a burden on the state!”

Without Stage 3 child care, Catherine Sabine—Forrestville mother to Jacquelyn, 8, and Tara, 7 and a Parent Voices member—says she’d be in a similar situation. “If I don’t have child care I won’t be able to work. Child care offers stability to children. They’re not being bounced all over the place, they have structure,” she adds.

Parents rally to save funding

Sonoma Parent Voices members are organizing parent visits to legislators’ offices and holding meetings to get more parents involved. Parents have sent out letters, spoken out on the radio, held events, and are coordinating a meeting with the Director of the California Department of Education.

“I’ve written legislators about the fact that having child care is really important to me,” adds Sabine. “I’ve come from the bottom, continued to go to school, and got a really good job. Child care is the number one thing.

PARENT VOICES

May 12: Stand for Children Day—Join 600 parents from around California to rally and march in Sacramento for quality child care. Tell legislators how important affordable child care is to your family’s security.

For more information, contact: Mary Ignatius, 415-882-0234, mignatius@rrnetwork.org

There is no way I could have gone to school and work without child care.”

“They want families off of welfare, but [losing child care will] put families right back on aid. It’s a vicious cycle. You’re going to have more homeless children,” adds Sabine.

Stipends strengthen early care and education programs

CARES funding is “too important to be tied up!” says Marva Lyons, a long-time family child care provider and Corps member in Alameda. “A lot of providers [need] stipends to help pay for books and units, [or] substitutes [so they can] take a class during the day.”

Support is even more important now that the state is planning a statewide system for rating the quality of early care and education programs (QRIS), Lyons adds.

CARES stipends helped “change my whole perspective when working with infants and toddlers,” says Ansina Green, a family child care provider in Perris and Riverside Corps participant. The stipends allowed Green to attend trainings where “I learned to use more neutral tones, because too many colors is over-stimulating to children. When I first [started], I thought the more colorful the better.” The stipend also helped her landscape her dirt play area and add play equipment.

Thanks to CARES stipends, Lyons is working on her A.A. degree in early childhood education. As a result, she has added learning centers to her program—“The children and families I work with are so excited because now I have an arts center, a drama center, and

a reading and literacy center. [These] are what families are looking for in a place where their child will grow,” she says.

Teachers campaign for professional development programs

The Corps is mobilizing participants to oppose diversion of First 5 funds. When the governor’s budget proposal and then Senator Cox’s legislation proposed putting a measure on the ballot again to use First 5 funds for other state programs, participants sent letters, talked with legislators, and testified before legislative committees in opposition to the bill. Both the proposal and the legislation have been rejected, but advocates are concerned that a proposal may be reintroduced in July.

The Corps is also calling on First 5 to approve funding for the CARES Plus program. The Riverside Corps group has been writing letters, meeting with legislators, and attending First 5 meetings.

While Riverside participants can’t attend all the First 5 meetings, “we’re getting everyone to pitch in to make sure two providers attend each meeting,” says Green. The group recently held a Leadership Alliance Summit funded by the California Department of Education which trained providers to be mentors and develop leadership skills.

The Alameda Corps group is also organizing center teachers and family child care providers to write and visit their local legislators in the first week of May. Providers will talk about the importance of CARES, and also the need to build support for teachers and providers into plans for the statewide quality rating system. “When [teachers come] together, what a strong, strong voice we have!” adds Lyons.

“We’re going to [invite] legislators to come out to [our programs] and see what we’re all about,” adds Lyons. “I want them to know who I am. We need their support and they need our support.”

At the Child Development Coalition Retreat in Sacramento, Lyons and other teachers learned more about the state and federal budgets and met with legislative program staff. “It was awesome to see new teachers come,” she says. “They come out of the background when they see the opportunities to get involved in the state legislature.” Lyons refers newly active providers to the Working for Quality Child Care website. “I tell them to use the information when they’re out speaking to other providers,” she adds.

Green is also creating a YouTube video with providers in her area “to show what family child care is, so [people] can see we’re not babysitters,” she says.

For more budget activism, see p.4

CALIFORNIA CHILD DEVELOPMENT CORPS

April 21: Attend the First 5 Commission meeting and speak out about the importance of continuing CARES through CARES Plus.

Visit legislators near you with the Corps.

Stay up to date on early care and education policy developments and advocacy opportunities at www.W4QCC.org. Check out the Corps, Updates, and Take Action (under Workforce Development)!

For more information, contact: Sara Hicks-Kilday, 415-808-7327, cares@caccwrc.org

For Spanish, contact: Teresa Calle-Streicher, 415-821-7871

Call to action on early care and education

Parents, teachers, and providers are strongly encouraged to give input on plans for a statewide early care and education quality rating system. The ELQIS Advisory Committee invites you to share your ideas about how this system could help parents find quality care and help teachers and providers strengthen their programs. **Attend upcoming meetings:** June 16 in Woodland, San Diego, and Fresno; August 3 in Woodland, LA, and Madera. For more information, contact Roberta Peck, 916-322-4269, rpeck@cde.ca.gov, or visit www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/sb1629calendar.asp

Protect your family from the flu

The Centers for Disease Control warn that people are still at risk from H1N1 flu (swine flu). Children under five are at higher risk for complications. The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine, prevent the flu from spreading with good hygiene, and stay home when they are sick. For more information in multiple languages, see flu.gov

The Governor's budget would cut kids programs

The state faces a \$20 billion gap. The governor's budget proposes to close the gap with a combination of deep cuts to spending, more federal aid, and extending some tax increases.

The budget presents two scenarios. If the state doesn't get \$6.9 billion more in federal funds, the budget proposes to eliminate CalWORKs, Healthy Families, and Prop 63 funded mental health programs and also raise the income requirements for people to qualify for Medi-Cal.

If the state gets additional federal funds, below are some of the key proposed cuts (many were rejected by the legislature in previous years).

Child care and development

- Provide CalWORKs child care funds to "only the neediest families" when they leave welfare (Stage 3), rather than all former CalWORKs families who qualify
- Reduce reimbursement rates for early care and education programs in the alternative payment program and CalWORKs Stage 2 and 3.

Health

- Divert First 5 funds to the Developmental and Social Services Departments (voters rejected last year's ballot measure).

- Limit Medi-Cal services and increase copayments and/or premiums
- Eliminate Medi-Cal for some immigrants
- Limit Healthy Families to children in families with incomes through 200% of the federal poverty level —experts predict 200,000 children would lose health coverage
- Double some Healthy Families premiums and eliminate vision benefits.
- Eliminate the California Food Assistance Program.

CalWORKs

- Reduce grants by 15.7%
- Eliminate CalWORKs benefits for legal immigrants in the US less than five years.

Schools

- Reduce state funding (Prop 98) by \$892 million in 2009-10 and \$1.54 billion in 2010-11.
- Change statutes so that districts can lay off, assign, and rehire teachers regardless of seniority.

Sources: *California Budget Project, 100% Campaign, Health Access, CDPI*

Advocacy days: Make your voice heard!

April 20: ENACT: Nutrition and activity lobby day. California Food Policy Advocates, 510-433-1122, ext 103, www.cfpa.net/ENACT2010

April 26 & 27: Budget Action Days. California Partnership, 213-385-8010, www.californiapartnership.org (see p.4)

May 12: Stand for Children Day. Parent Voices, 415-882-0234 (see p.10)

May 17-18: California Afterschool Challenge. CalSAC, 415-957-9775, www.calsac.org

May 17: Immigrant Day. California Immigrant Policy Center, 916-448-6762, www.caimmigrant.org

May 19: Hunger Action Day. California Hunger Action Coalition, 213-388-8228, www.hungeraction.net

June 15: Early Learning Advocacy Day. Preschool California, 510-271-0075, www.preschoolcalifornia.org and California Association for the Education of Young Children, 916-486-7750, www.caeyc.org

Support early learning in the federal budget

Action: Preschool California is asking people to call on Congress to support President Obama's early childhood budget proposals.

Background: President Obama's FY 2011 budget proposal builds on his commitment to a comprehensive Zero to Five plan. It includes an additional \$989 million for Head Start and Early Head Start, an additional \$1.6 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, support for Early Learning Challenge Fund legislation (\$8.9 billion over 10 years), and \$210 million for Promise Neighborhoods.

Contact Congress by sending a letter through Preschool California's online action center, www.preschoolcalifornia.org (click on "Take action on the 2011 budget")