



CHILDREN NOW



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Governor Brown Proposes Only Minimal Increases in Quality Early Childhood Education**

*Early Childhood Education Coalition calls on California State Assembly and Senate to make quality early childhood education top priority*

**(Sacramento, CA)**— Today Governor Brown released the May Revision to his proposal for the California [2015-16 state budget](#). Despite the \$6.7 billion growth in revenue that includes \$5.5 billion in Proposition 98 funds, which support preK-14 education, the governor’s proposal includes only minimal increases for young learners from birth to age 5.

The May Revision proposes a slight increase to the State Preschool Program, and new mandates for parent engagement and teacher professional development to better serve children with special needs in our preschool classrooms. The proposal also includes a recognition of expected new federal dollars for supporting high-quality child care, and earmarks at least part of those expected dollars for a new Infant and Toddler Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) block grant. This block grant proposal could build on last year’s budget achievement of an ongoing QRIS block grant for the State Preschool Program, and First 5 California’s recent investment of \$190 million to support QRIS across the state. However, the budget also contains decreases to child care programs and COLA proposals, compared to the January budget, which moves the conversation in the wrong direction. The budget proposal also includes a \$30 million Proposition 98 increase for the Early Education Program for Infants and Toddlers with Exceptional Needs, which identifies and provides early interventions for infants from birth to age 2 with special needs.

**In response, the Early Childhood Education Coalition said:**

“We are disappointed in the May Revision’s failure to significantly increase investments in access, affordability and quality for early childhood education for our children from birth through age 5.

With state revenues growing each month, California should be making wise investments in programs with proven outcomes. The research is crystal clear—early childhood education is one of the best investments we can make to not only provide our youngest

and most vulnerable children with quality early learning experiences they need to thrive in school and in life, but to give their working families the opportunity to participate in our recovering economy.

We call on the Assembly and the Senate to seize the small recognition contained in this May Revise proposal and use it as an invitation to continue their stand for our youngest learners and send Governor Brown a budget that invests in quality early childhood education.”

“Significant and stable investments in our early learning system are the soundest way to bridge the achievement gap in California's schools and improve each child's chance for success in life. We hope this year's budget debate will set up a long-term plan to rebuild and strengthen a high-quality learning and care system for all our children ages 0 to 5, including the supports their parents need to help them thrive,” said Camille Maben, Executive Director of First 5 California. “We are slightly heartened by the governor's recognition that more can and should be done around preschool access and quality in a robust Prop 98 year, but his proposal is just a drop in the bucket for what we need and can do for children in a budget year like this.”

Assembly Democrats, the California State Women's Legislative Caucus, and Senate leaders have made this issue a top priority, but the governor's proposal holds funding virtually steady for the early learning system in California, despite the clear need for quality early learning opportunities for our state's youngest children and working families.

Since 2008, \$1 billion has been cut from the early learning and care system in California. As a result, far fewer of our vulnerable infants and toddlers are enrolled in programs that support their healthy development, and only minimal reinvestments have been made—only 6% of income-eligible children under age 3 are served by any publicly supported programs. Additionally, the demand for new preschool spaces funded in last year's budget was more than 8 times the number of spaces available, and the California Department of Education acknowledges the need is likely much greater.

California's steady economic recovery and growing revenues present an opportunity to reinvest in these programs in ways that increase access, affordability, and quality.

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The Early Childhood Education Coalition is a partnership of statewide and regional early childhood education advocacy and policy organizations that support investments in quality Early Care and Education (ECE) programs for our state's youngest children. In order to continue building a successful early learning system that works for California's families and young children, we highly encourage the state to continue making significant investments in three fundamentally linked priority areas: **access, affordability, and quality.**

First 5 California, established through a voter approved initiative in 1998 known as the California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10), oversees the expenditure of tobacco tax revenues to support, promote, and optimize early childhood development through coordinated programs that emphasize child health, parent education, child care, and other services and programs for children prenatal through age 5. First 5 California's overarching goal is to improve the lives of young children and their families to ensure California's children receive the best possible start in life and thrive. First 5 California is proud to be a member of the Early Childhood Education Coalition.