Oakland Starting Smart & Strong

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MATTERS IN OAKLAND:

An Informational Guide for Elected Officials and Candidates

Early childhood policy includes health care, public health, the economy, and education. Within this broader context, this guide is a tool for policymakers to understand specific early childhood education policy priorities in Oakland.

EARLY CHILDHOOD IS A CRITICAL LIFE STAGE.

***90%** of a child's brain develops in the first 5 years.*

- *There are over **29,925** children ages 0-5 years in Oakland.*
- *In 2018, **68% of children aged 3-5 were living under 85% of the State Median Income** ($41,023 in 2018).*

Early education advances equity.
Oakland's elected officials must prioritize our youngest children.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Oakland elected officials can take action on making early childhood education a priority by:

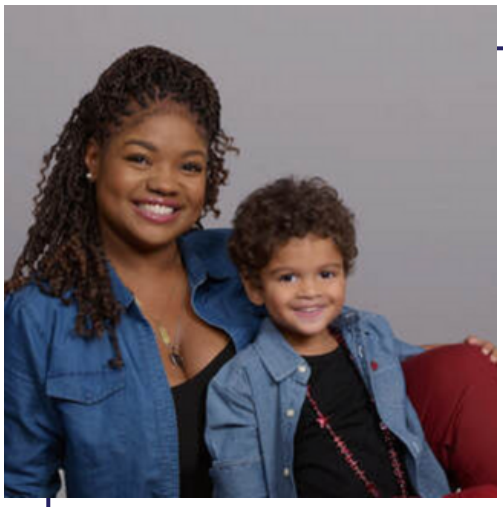
➢ Equitable Oakland Children's Initiative, Measure C, and Universal PreK/TK policy implementation within Oakland

➢ Uplifting early childhood as a priority in Oakland city government and school district

➢ Supporting Oakland early childhood educator and provider advocacy goals

UNDERSTANDING OAKLAND FAMILIES' CHILD CARE NEEDS

Young children and early childhood education matter in Oakland.



"**Systems need to understand different family structures.** Oakland has single parents, co-parents, two-parent households, and extended families taking care of young children. Each family has different needs and preferences for child care. **Ideally, there would be 24/7 care because of family work schedules.** Policymakers need to consider parents who work in the food industry, work on the weekends, or have graveyard shifts. **Location matters. Transportation matters. Safety and trust matter.** We need more holistic solutions for child are, especially with before and after school care in Transitional Kindergarten." — Noni Galloway, Parent Advocate, Parent Voices Oakland

*Systems have failed to prepare **66%** of OUSD kindergarteners for future school success*

"**We will always support our families and the people they entrust – early care educators – to ensure our youngest learners thrive.**

We will be open, responsive, and an advocate for issues to address policies that impact our families and their ability to thrive.

We will strive to see our vision realized – that all children grow up to succeed in life and that they have all the support and tools they need to be eager and curious learners." — Kym Johnson, CEO, BANANAS

> **Our country is facing a childcare and education crisis on top of a pandemic.** Women across the country— especially low-income women and women for color— are struggling to make ends meet. **Childcare providers are almost entirely women and 40 percent are people of color.**
>
> Providing relief to help keep childcare centers and schools open is critical for our students, parents, educators, and care providers.
>
> As a single mother who raised two little boys, I know the importance of childcare for working mothers." — Congresswoman Barbara Lee

Oakland is a child care desert. Currently, Oakland does not meet families' child care needs because there are not enough child care slots available for the number of children who need care. This shortage has been made worse during the pandemic due to closures of child care businesses.

- In 2020, there was an unmet need of **91%** for subsidized infant/toddler care.
- Since 2006, capacity for child care for children from birth to age 5 has decreased; licensed center capacity has **declined by 21.8%** and licensed family child care capacity **reduced by 57.2%**.

Oakland elected officials and candidates for public office must:

➢ Ensure Oakland is a welcoming city, with excellent resources and supports, for the high number of families with young children.

➢ Work towards a city where all young children and families have access to opportunities to realize their full potential.

➢ Understand how to invest resources in systems to ensure our babies, toddlers, and preschoolers flourish.

➢ Center systems-building efforts on children, families, and educators most impacted by racial and economic inequities – Oakland's Black and Brown communities.

➢ Commit to understanding how the Oakland Children's Initiative, Measure C, and Universal PreK/TK impact early childhood education in Oakland and advocate for equitable implementation.

Who takes care of Oakland's babies, toddlers, and preschoolers? The early childhood **mixed-delivery system**

What is the mixed delivery system?

No one agency or organization runs the entire system. The mixed-delivery system is the full spectrum of private, public, and non-profit early care and education programs and settings that care for young children. Programs and settings include:

- Family child care (FCC) homes
- Friend/family/neighbor caregivers
- Publicly or privately funded child care centers
- Head Start
- Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)
- Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

How is the system funded?

Many programs are funded by a combination of private pay, public subsidies, large public contracts, and/or philanthropy. Federal, state, and local dollars all play a part.

Who are the educators taking care of our children?

Child care providers are essential workers, critical to our economy: parents can go to work because of child care. Though child care is expensive for families, child care providers are underpaid. They are mostly older women of color.

Between 2022-2026, Transitional Kindergarten (TK) will expand statewide to include all four-year-olds. This represents a major structural shift in the mixed-delivery system of care for our youngest Californians. **Read our report on Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) here: https://bit.ly/OSSS_UTKReport**

Percentage of Child Care Providers Earning Less Than $15/hour in Alameda County, 2020

***59%** of our county's Family Child Care providers and **20%** of Child Care Center providers reported being paid **less than $15 per hour** (or $31,050 annually) in 2020*

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WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- Make early childhood education affordable and accessible for all families
- Protect and retain child care businesses, which have high costs and low profits, making them vulnerable to external or unexpected events, such as a pandemic or family emergency.
- Recruit and retain a dedicated workforce by providing quality wages and benefits, options for career mobility in the early childhood field, and educational and professional development opportunities that value on-the-job experience

About Oakland Starting Smart and Strong

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS) is a citywide collaborative of over 50 partners that advances racial justice, develops and amplifies community-driven solutions, and advocates for changes in policy and resources to create an early childhood ecosystem that effectively serves children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators. Join the OSSS Task Force!

Contact us at info@oaklandsmartandstrong.org for more information.

Sources:

- First 5 Alameda County 2021 Needs Assessment
- First 5 AC 2021 Data for Action Factsheet
- 2020 Early Development Instrument (EDI) data