



February 11, 2016

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

In your State of the State address, you reminded us that “neglecting what we have built over many years and letting it further deteriorate makes no sense and will just pile up costs in the long run.” While you may have been referring specifically to roads, this statement represents our child care system, as it struggles to serve sufficient numbers of eligible children.

The Legislative Women’s Caucus is continuing this year with a policy agenda to secure economic opportunity for all women. Central to making California stronger is ensuring access to quality, affordable and accessible child care. We believe there is no better or more effective investment in our future that also makes sense for our economy. When parents cannot find or afford child care, the economy loses valued workers. Parents risk piecing together care that might not meet a child’s needs or being forced out of the job market, causing their children to miss opportunities to learn.

To accurately reflect the reality that California is a state where mothers are significant contributors in the economy, the Legislative Women’s Caucus has made it a priority that to five years all working families have access to quality affordable child care. As an initial investment, we are asking for 800 million dollars in the 2016-17 budget in order to serve tens of thousands of children, prioritize our youngest learners, prevent disruption of care for those children, and recognize the important and professional nature of the work providers deliver to our state’s working families. This down payment will begin to repair the deteriorating foundation upon which our child care system was built.

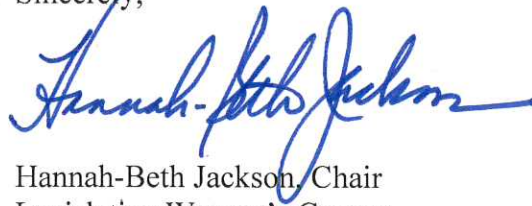
We recognize that over the past two years the Women’s Caucus has helped restore more than \$500 million into early care and education programs, reinstating preschool and child care for more than 45,000 children – and we are appreciative of your restorative actions. While preschool programs are rebounding with that additional funding, support for sufficient and quality child care continues to lag. While we are making progress, it is remarkable how far we still have to go to ensure available and quality child care, especially for our youngest children.

We are appreciative of your ideas that seek to streamline and create efficiencies. However, the child care system has been underfunded for years, causing cracks in the service delivery as more small businesses go out of business and women exit the profession because it does not pay enough to support their families. When repairing roads, the cracks in the base need to be fixed before the street can be resurfaced; before we attempt to reform our early care and learning system we need to make sure it is properly funded and serving working families.

Women in the workforce are an economic reality – not an optional choice women make. In the U.S. 70 percent of mothers work and more than 40 percent of mothers are the sole or primary breadwinners for their families, earning at least half of their family's income.¹ In order for these women to provide for their families, they must have adequate access to childcare and early education. Without it, our economy will suffer, our children will suffer, and our future will suffer.

We look forward to working with you and our legislative leadership to develop a plan that will give every eligible parent accessible and reliable care for their children, and give providers the support to provide that care in a dignified and economically viable manner that reflects the priorities and fiscal realities of the state.

Sincerely,



Hannah-Beth Jackson, Chair
Legislative Women's Caucus
Senate District 19



Cristina Garcia, Vice-Chair
Legislative Women's Caucus
Assembly District 58

cc: Honorable Toni G. Atkins, Speaker of the Assembly
Honorable Kevin de León, Senate President pro Tempore of the Senate
Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker-Elect of the Assembly
Honorable Shirley Weber, Chair – Assembly Budget Committee
Honorable Mark Leno, Chair – Senate Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Senate Budget Committee

¹ Cooper, Marianne, *Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times* (University of California Press, 2014)