



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: January 23, 2024

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS TO COMBAT THE
CHILDCARE CRISIS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

San Diego County is facing an urgent childcare crisis. Childcare options are often unaffordable, scarce, and inconvenient, leaving many families to struggle finding a reliable provider. Many working parents are forced to leave their job, not enter the workforce, or struggle to balance their career and raising their children. These challenges are especially pertinent for single-parent families, lower income households, and women— in particular women of color.

Childcare is a critical component of the region's economic fabric, supports working parents and provides entrepreneurial opportunities for childcare business operators. In addition, it helps ensure children have a safe place to learn and grow up. It is essential that significant and meaningful investments are made within our early care and education system so that every family in San Diego has access to quality childcare providers, and children's developmental needs are supported.

The County adopted the Child Care Blueprint in August of 2023, which is a guiding vision to ensure that childcare needs of our local families and children are met. The Blueprint prioritizes workforce investments, safe and quality facilities, especially in areas where childcare availability is sparse, and that all families have access to childcare that meets their needs and preferences. Millions of dollars have been dedicated to our childcare workforce over the last couple of years, but the need is far greater. Additionally, in late 2023, two pilot programs were approved to add licensing and infrastructure capacity for childcare providers and provide emergency family care days for County workers who may need flexibility to care for their children in unforeseen circumstances.

Today's action requests to continue to move forward with the priorities of the Child Care Blueprint by providing childcare start-up costs to new childcare providers locally, enhancing the childcare

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database of providers and coordinating communication needs, and helping with peer-based needs such as mentorship and workforce opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

VICE-CHAIR LAWSON-REMER AND CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to utilize \$1,250,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to provide Childcare startup costs for new Childcare providers locally. These funds would be focused on infrastructure needs within identified childcare deserts.
2. Direct CAO to utilize \$500,000 in ARPA dollars to create a County-based and expanded Childcare database of providers or enhance existing databases through partner organizations to track new providers locally, identifying providers leaving the space, and coordinate communications needs.
3. Direct CAO to utilize \$250,000 in ARPA dollars for Childcare peer-based needs such as mentorship and workforce opportunities.
4. Revise the ARPA Framework to use the remaining \$1,000,000 unallocated balance in the Childcare Facility Development and Improvement element of the Framework and \$1,000,000 of the Assistance for Homeworkers and Childcare Workers element of the Framework to fund recommendations 1, 2, and 3.
5. Transfer appropriations of \$2,000,000 from Finance Other, Other Charges, to the Health and Human Services Agency, Services & Supplies, to fund recommendations 1-3 based on ARPA funds described in recommendation 4.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

San Diego County is facing a massive childcare crisis. Many families live in childcare deserts without access to providers, creating a complex equity issue. This item will help to bolster infrastructure, workforce, and communications needs for programming locally so that new providers in childcare deserts are able to more easily provide services to their respective communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to bring additional childcare infrastructure and workforce opportunities to the region, has the potential to reduce overall greenhouse gases in San Diego County by reducing the need for families to drive as far to access viable childcare providers.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Plan in Finance Other. If approved, this request will result in cost and revenue of \$2.0 million dollars in the Health and Human Services Agency for childcare startup costs for new childcare providers, a childcare database, and mentorship and workforce opportunities. The funding source for this request is American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding allocated directly to the County of San Diego. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

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BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed actions will help provide additional resources for childcare providers and the Childcare workforce in San Diego County through adding imperative supports such as startup costs for infrastructure needs, creating a database of providers with communications tools, and working to bolster childcare peer-based needs such as mentorship and workforce opportunities.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

San Diego County is facing an urgent childcare crisis. Childcare options are often unaffordable, scarce, and inconvenient, leaving many families to struggle finding a reliable provider. Many working parents are forced to leave their job, not enter the workforce, or struggle to balance their career and raising their children. These challenges are especially pertinent for single-parent families, lower income households, and women— in particular women of color. Childcare is not only a critical component of the region’s economic fabric but helps ensure children have a safe place to learn and grow up. It is essential that significant and meaningful investments are made within our early care and education system so that every family in San Diego has access to quality childcare providers, and children’s developmental needs are supported.

With the guidance of the local Childcare Plan and more recently the Child Care Blueprint (2023), the County has prioritized investing in our workforce, infrastructure, and programming needs. On June 08, 2021 (3), the County dedicated \$10 million dollars to childcare workforce investments. The primary focus of this program is to focus on critical support for new and existing early care and education. This includes creating access to tuition support, professional development, and a targeted focus on family childcare providers that were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and struggled to sustain their business. There will be job training for existing and new early educators joining the workforce, funding to pay for continuing education in early care and additional education for those that seek to become better educated on trauma informed practices for working with diverse needs. Retention stipends providing additional financial support to childcare providers who are not eligible for supplemental rates paid by California Department of Social Services are also included as part of this program. Outcome measures will be utilized in alignment with the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative as this program is carried out to monitor its success and ensure actions are in alignment with the local Childcare Plan.

On June 08, 2021 (3), \$2 million was also dedicated to the Childcare Shared Services Alliance. This program is modeled after nationally recognized processes for early care and education. This framework is designed to support linkages and build childcare capacity, help maximize enrollment, collect tuition fees in full and on time, manage expenses, and strengthen family and community engagement for childcare providers. Family childcare providers will be prioritized based on the Healthy Places Index (HPI), identifying communities that have been disproportionately impacted. The establishment of this program aims to help to connect providers within the community to build leadership, become financially sound, efficient, and better able to offer affordable, high-quality services for children and families.

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In August of 2023, the County of San Diego adopted the Child Care Blueprint which is a guiding vision to ensure that childcare needs of our local families and children are met. A collaborative group of local organizations, workforce representatives helped to develop the Blueprint, with the intention of creating meaningful changes to our childcare system by bolstering the workforce and benefits, infrastructure, and access to providers. The three main priority areas in the Blueprint are: the childcare workforce is well-trained, supported, valued as a profession, and paid competitive wages; safe and quality facilities are developed and renovated to expand childcare programs, particularly in geographic areas where childcare is scarce, or family demand outpaces supply; and; all families have access to childcare that meets their needs and preferences and supports their children's learning, physical and mental health, and social-emotional development.

On September 12, 2023 (22), Supervisor Lawson-Remer and Supervisor Vargas brought forward a policy that included two childcare related pilots to be developed by the County. The first pilot allocated \$500,000 and aimed to support the Child Care Blueprint vision by adding licensing and infrastructure capacity for new and existing childcare providers across the region. The second pilot also allocated \$500,000 and aimed to establish a childcare emergency flex day program for County staff, and was further expanded, to also include emergency care days for County staff taking care of older family members. This program will allow employees to take paid time off to tend to important familial needs.

Utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars budgeted for purposes of childcare infrastructure and programs, today's action requests to continue to move forward with the priorities of the Child Care Blueprint by providing childcare start-up costs to new childcare providers locally, enhancing the childcare database of providers and coordinating communication needs, and helping with peer-based needs such as mentorship and workforce opportunities.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

These actions support the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan Sustainability, Empower, Equity, and Community initiatives by investing in local childcare providers and workforce through family services that will enhance well-being, resiliency, and quality of life across the San Diego region.

Respectfully submitted,



TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Supervisor, Third District



NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, First District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A