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Saldaña Benavides Consulting

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Pasadena, California 94401

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CITY CLERK
CITY OF PASADENA

February 20, 2022

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council:

It is with great respect that I write this letter. In this letter I have two requests. First, that the City of Pasadena support the continuation and expansion of the Office of the Young Child. Second, to approve the establishment of the Task Force on Early Childhood Development.

The City of Pasadena is at a critical juncture. The Early Childhood Education (ECE) field was embattled prior to the pandemic. Many home-based and center-based childcare educators have shut their doors since the inception of Covid. Our ECE field is a community. It is made up of dedicated educators, many of them educators of color who do not receive just compensation for the vital work they do in caring for and preparing our next generation of leaders. This community also consists of our City's youngest learners, children with big dreams in their hearts as they reach for their full potential. Finally, this community consists of parents and caretakers who want safe learning spaces for their children so they can reach their dreams.

This community, often consisting of low-income families and people of color, face insurmountable barriers such as loss of employment, lack of affordable housing, and lack of access to child care programs. Prior to Covid, educators struggled to keep their doors open. Now, during our crises and without a comprehensive system of support many of them have had to close their doors resulting in families scrambling to find child care. The Taskforce has an incredible opportunity to help bridge these jarring gaps.

I have the honor of serving as current Chair for the Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee. If this Task Force is formed, I look forward to connecting the Office of the Young Child to other Cities to better understand their promising practices and potential partnerships to assist us in our effort.

It is critical we support the Office of the Young Child to forge its pathway to serve Pasadena's ECE community. I ask that you approve the formation of this Task Force to put the City of Pasadena back on the path to become the Early Learning City by 2025. This is not going to be an easy task. We need comprehensive support from our local government leaders at the City and District to work together to serve our City's youngest learners, their families and the educators who serve them.

In community,



Ernesto Lopez Saldaña, JD, CPC
President, Saldaña Benavides Consulting

02/28/2022
Item 11

Options for Learning Child Care Directors Alliance

February 23, 2022

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council,

One of the many discoveries of the pandemic has been learning who are truly our essential workers. Those who care for children, especially for those under 5 years of age, were deemed essential as the country realized there was no possibility of economic recovery without the recovery of child care. Parents could not and cannot work without child care.

My name is Toni Boucher. I have been serving as Chair of the *Options for Learning Child Care Directors Alliance* for over 20 years. I represent at least fifty (50) child care centers and thousands of children served by these programs. *Options for Learning* is a state funded resource and referral service for child care which has a catchment area that includes Pasadena, Altadena, and Sierra Madre. Once holding a monthly meeting, the public health emergency of COVID created an urgency for weekly online meetings over the last 2+ years, and these weekly meetings continue.

I am writing this letter in support of the full implementation of the Early Child Development Policy adopted by the City of Pasadena to guide the work of the Office of the Young Child and the formation of the Task Force on Early Child Development and Early Learning. We have lost the momentum toward *becoming an Early Learning City by 2025*.

As a founding member in the creation and development of the *City of Pasadena's Early Child Development Policy*, I eagerly looked to its full implementation as a source of support and assistance to caregivers and families during the desperate days of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the assistance was not forthcoming. Child Care Directors were scrambling to understand public health guidelines so that child care could safely reopen to allow families to return to work. We supported each other and the families in our programs as we attended webinars and waded through complex, confusing, and ever evolving public health orders.

It was deeply disappointing to all of us that the City's thoughtfully crafted and science-based Policy and vision, its systemic implementation, coordination, and action steps which I know were designed to pull together city departments and the community in service to children in these early years were not visible and supportive at a time of unprecedented need.

The pandemic is not over. We have been exceedingly grateful to Dr. Goh and her staff for their responsiveness to our pleas to attend our meetings and to share updates so the child care directors can make good decisions based on current public health orders.

While the threat of the pandemic remains, child care is facing the continuing challenge of recovery and a new challenge of universal preschool. Publicly funded preschool for all is supported by a large majority of Americans. And, if our private community preschools are not included in the delivery system, the current fragile infrastructure of child care in our community could be decimated. It is critical that the city, school district, and community plan together for the funding coming forward to ensure high quality preschool for all. The Office of the Young Child through implementation of the Policy is the natural entity to pull together these stakeholders for successful planning that will move the needle toward achieving the City Council approved goal of the Policy and its vision: *Pasadena, An Early Learning City by 2025*.

I urge the City Council at this historical time filled with both threats and opportunities to support the full implementation of the Early Child Development Policy and to approve the Task Force on Early Child Development and Early Learning. It is not hyperbole to state that fully embracing this work by the City of Pasadena will positively transform our community for generations to come. The optimal well-being of young children, their families, and their caregivers depends on the work we do now.

Sincerely,
Toni Boucher
Chair, Child Care Directors Alliance