

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 2982 (Reyes) – As Amended April 2, 2024

SUBJECT: Prenatal-to-3 working group

SUMMARY: Requires the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) to convene a workgroup by March 1, 2025, to craft evidence-based and community-informed recommendations for a statewide comprehensive, equity-focused prenatal-to-three system agenda. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the workgroup to be composed of 12 members, with a focus on including individuals representing community groups that serve young children and their families, First 5 commissions, and state designees from the CHHS and its associated departments, legislative members, and researchers, including member(s) with state and local financing expertise, as follows:
 - a) Four Governor’s Appointees, including two cochairs of the workgroup.
 - b) Four Senate President pro Tempore Appointees.
 - c) Four Speaker of the Assembly Appointees.
- 2) Requires the workgroup to review current policies and practices at the state and local level related to the following:
 - a) Early childhood systems, including local First 5 California infrastructure and needs;
 - b) Outlining additional recommendations for system building, including financing, data, and the needs of specific subpopulations of young children; and,
 - c) Working with state agencies to ensure alignment and partnership so that all of California’s young children and their families can thrive.
- 3) Requires the workgroup to submit its recommendations to the administration and to the Legislature by January 31, 2026. Requires the workgroup to provide updates to the Early Childhood Policy Council to ensure that the council is informed on the workgroup’s recommendations prior to release of the report.
- 4) Sunsets this workgroup on January 1, 2030.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Child Care and Development Services Act for the purposes of:
 - a) Providing a coordinated, comprehensive, and cost-effective system serving children from birth to 13 years of age and their parents, including a full range of supervision, health, and support services through full- and part-time programs;

- b) Encouraging community-level coordination in support of childcare and development services;
 - c) Providing an environment that is healthy and nurturing for all children in childcare and development programs;
 - d) Providing the opportunity for positive parenting to take place through understanding of human growth and development;
 - e) Reducing strain between parent and child in order to prevent abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
 - f) Enhancing the cognitive development of children, with particular emphasis upon those children who require special assistance, including bilingual capabilities to attain their full potential;
 - g) Establishing a framework for the expansion of childcare and development services; and,
 - h) Empowering and encouraging parents and families of children who require childcare services to take responsibility to review the safety of the childcare program or facility and to evaluate the ability of the program or facility to meet the needs of the child. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 10207)
- 2) Establishes the “Early Education Act” to provide an inclusive and cost-effective preschool program that provides high-quality learning experiences, coordinated services, and referrals for families to access health and social-emotional support services through full- and part-day programs and that all families have equitable access to a high-quality preschool program, regardless of race or ethnic status, cultural, religious, or linguistic background, family composition, or children with exceptional needs. (Education Code [EDC] § 8200 *et seq.*)
- 3) Establishes the California Child Day Care Facilities Act to provide a comprehensive, quality system for licensing child daycare facilities to ensure that working families have access to healthy and safe childcare providers and that childcare programs contribute positively to a child's emotional, cognitive, and educational development, and are able to respond to, and provide for, the unique characteristics and needs of children. (Health and Safety Code [HSC] § 1596.70 *et seq.*)
- 4) Establishes the Early Childhood Policy Council to advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the California Department of Social Services on statewide early learning and care policy, including the planning for, and the implementation and evaluation of, the state’s Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Early Childhood Education Final Report. (WIC § 10320)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Background: *The Early Childhood Policy Council.* According to CHHS, the Early Childhood Policy Council meets quarterly and their role is to “elevate the needs of young children and their families as well as advise the Governor, Legislature and the Superintendent of Public Instruction

on statewide early learning, care and child development. It will provide recommendations on all aspects of the state's early childhood system, including support for the demographic, geographic and economic diversity of the state's children and families and ways the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the Assembly BRC on Early Childhood Education's final report can be updated and improved."

Master Plan for Early Learning and Care. In recent years, California has shifted focus from bifurcated systems to consider the "whole child" or "whole person". This shift helps look at children from all aspects of their lives and understand how education, health, home life, etc. all play into each other. Research has highlighted how important early childhood is for brain development. The first three years of life are the most critical time for brain development that shapes the foundational intellectual, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary for successful lives. These skills are gained through nurturing interactions between children and their families, caregivers, and early educators.

Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education. The BRC on Early Childhood Education was established with the intent to "plan an early learning system that works for/meets the needs of children, families, and providers." The BRC was dedicated to the development of strategic solutions to improve outcomes for young learners in California. In April 2019, the Final Report for the BRC was released including several recommendations to achieve its vision of an early care and education system linked to comprehensive support that works for children, families, and providers and improves outcomes for young learners.

The BRC report states that "as children's wellbeing is inextricably connected to the wellbeing of their family, we must take a two-generation whole child and whole family approach. Our systems should look at families as a whole when designing programs and reflect the dual priorities of care and education for children and support for parents who are working, preparing to work or going to school." The report further states that "Equity and equality are not the same... California's [early childhood education] system should recognize this and focus on increasing equity and eliminating systemic barriers for those most excluded from opportunity."

This bill seeks to create a workgroup to build on the work that has been done on the early learning and care side by the Early Childhood Policy Council, the Blue Ribbon Commission, and the state master plan with an expanded focus on health, including mental health, early childhood development, and family support, among other issues, or a whole child/whole family approach.

Author's Statement: According to the Author, "California has made progress in supporting young children and their families; however, significant gaps remain, and we must comprehensively work to address the needs of California's infants, toddlers, and their families. AB 2982 establishes a workgroup to develop recommendations focused on establishing a 10-year comprehensive, equity-focused prenatal-to-three system policy agenda. There is a need for a systemic approach that focuses on the needs of infants and toddlers that ensures access to services regardless of where children live in the state. The workgroup created under this bill will be responsible for reviewing current policies and practices related to early childhood systems, developing recommendations to address the needs of subpopulations of young children, and ensuring there is alignment and partnership among state agencies to ensure our young children can thrive."

Equity Implications: Research has shown that early care and education has a significant effect on children's development and that, in particular, high-quality early care and education promotes

children's development and learning, and narrows socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic inequalities while promoting parental employment and family self-sufficiency. Studies have also shown that public investments in preschool contribute to dramatic increases in participation in early learning programs in the year or two prior to children's entry into kindergarten. However, the quality of that care is not equivalent across all education centers; research has shown that centers that low-income children attend provide lower quality care, on average, than those attended by their higher-income peers. However, income level is only one indicator of inequities. Access to childcare, physical and mental health services, childhood adversity, and community safety are also important factors in a child's development and success.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 2581 (Reyes) of 2020, would have created the Department of Early Child Development within CHHS focused on early childhood development and established an interagency workgroup to ensure there is no disruption in programming during the transfer of programs to the new department. *AB 2581 was referred to the Senate Education Committee but was not set for a hearing.*

SB 75 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) Chapter 51, Statutes of 2019, established the Early Childhood Policy Council to advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning and care policy, building on the work of the state's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education Final Report.

AB 114 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 413, Statutes of 2019, established the Early Childhood Policy Council to advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning and care policy, building on the work of the state's Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the 2019 California Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education Final Report.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

First 5 Association of California (Sponsor)
 American Academy of Pediatrics, California
 American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists District IX
 California Catholic Conference
 Child Care Resource Center
 Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc.
 Children's Specialty Care Coalition
 County of Monterey
 First 5 Alameda County
 First 5 Butte County, Children's and Families Commission
 First 5 El Dorado Commission
 First 5 Fresno County
 First 5 Humboldt
 First 5 Kern
 First 5 Madera County

First 5 Mendocino
First 5 Monterey County
First 5 San Benito
First 5 San Francisco
First 5 San Luis Obispo County
First 5 San Mateo County
First 5 Santa Clara County
First 5 Santa Cruz County
First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission
First 5 Sonoma County
First 5 Tuolumne
First 5 Ventura County
Sutter County Children & Families Commission

Opposition

None on file.

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