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Contact: Mayor's Office of Communications, mayorspressoffice@sfgov.org

***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES \$25 MILLION EARLY
EDUCATION ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM**

The City will provide \$25 million in grants and zero-interest loans to child care providers help minimize the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on early care and education programs

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed today announced \$25 million in financial assistance for San Francisco's early care and education programs, which care for approximately 10,000 children across the city. These child care and education programs provide essential services for San Francisco families, however, many are struggling financially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and are at risk of permanently closing. Mayor Breed and former Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee created the Early Education Economic Recovery Program with funding from revenue unlocked by Proposition F. The Program will help San Francisco's early child care and education programs remain open and give them the resources they need to offer high-quality services to the children in their care.

San Francisco is home to more than 500 licensed and cooperative early care programs that may be eligible for grants of up to \$15,000 as part of this new program. Early care programs can also apply for additional support in the form of interest-free loans up to \$50,000, repayable over the next five years. These one-time funds will assist licensed early care and education programs and license-exempt cooperative preschool programs to cover costs associated with COVID-19 such as accommodation of smaller group sizes, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and staff compensation.

"The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take a significant toll on our entire community and economy, creating hardships that threaten the stability of our San Francisco early care and education system," said Mayor Breed. "Child care providers have really stepped up during the pandemic, with many of them providing emergency child care and making significant modifications to the way they operate. This program ensures that safe, high-quality early care and education remains available to our City's youngest residents during the pandemic and beyond, which will play a critical role in our economic recovery. Once parents and guardians go back to work, it's critical that they continue to have child care available to them and know that their children are in good hands."

This Early Education Economic Recovery Program is part of the Office of Early Care and Education's broader plan, developed in coordination with Mayor Breed and former President Yee, to close the early education gap for San Francisco's youngest children and their families and to raise wages for the professionals working in this sector. The program is funded with revenues that have been made available due to the passage of Proposition F in November 2020.



The June 2018 Proposition C, often referred to as “Baby C,” since it established the “Babies and Families First Fund,” is currently being litigated in court. Proposition F in November 2020 established a “backstop tax” that would come into effect only if the City loses the litigation. The backstop tax in Proposition F frees up funding to support early care and education investments in the spirit of Baby C. These additional funds will be programmed as part of the upcoming budget process.

This funding supports San Francisco’s COVID-19 response and economic recovery in several ways. The availability of safe, accessible child care options will be essential for families to successfully participate in and return to the workforce as San Francisco recovers. The program will provide much-needed financial relief to child care providers so that they can cover basic expenses and continue operating. With this funding, the City anticipates that more providers will be able to remain open, which preserves child care options that families need to. By providing targeted support for a sector that primarily employs women of color and has been proven to improve educational outcomes for students of color, the program advances Mayor Breed’s ongoing commitment to ensure San Francisco’s recovery is equitable and supports our most vulnerable residents.

“During the pandemic, we saw many early care providers make the tough decision to close and so many others are struggling to continue. We simply cannot afford to lose any more slots. These economic recovery grants and zero-interest loans to early care and education providers is not only essential to our City’s recovery, but will help build the foundation for what I hope will be the strongest universal early education system around the country,” said Supervisor Myrna Melgar. “Every child deserves high-quality early education. I want to thank former President Norman Yee for his visionary leadership in shepherding historic initiatives and developing this Economic Recovery program to provide the much-needed relief for our early care providers and the families that desperately need this support now and in the years ahead.”

“This is a huge lifeline for our Early Childcare Educators, our children, our city and for my district. District 11 has the most family childcare providers in the city and we have the second largest number of children under the age of six,” said Supervisor Ahsha Safaí. “Quality and affordable childcare is a basic right if we expect to have a just workforce for families. It is also imperative that we value, support and sustain our Early Care Providers and recognize their contribution to our workforce and this fund does just that.”

“Despite our early childhood teachers’ tireless efforts in providing safe early learning experiences to San Francisco’s children and families during this pandemic, ECE programs are financially struggling,” said Ingrid Mezquita, Director of the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education. “While group size restrictions, PPE purchases, and facilities upgrades are critical to keeping children and staff safe, they also create a significant financial burden for programs already struggling to keep pace with the high cost of operating in San Francisco. Grants and interest-free loans made available through the Early Education Economic Recovery Program will enable programs to focus on what matters most: caring for our City’s children and preparing them to succeed.”



This new, significant funding in early care and education will bolster programs that keep children on track for school success, support families, and provide jobs for child care professionals. In 2019, the Office of Early Care and Education found that 40% of Black and Latino students were not ready for Kindergarten, demonstrating the need for continued investments in improving outcomes for students from historically disadvantaged communities. Ensuring early care and education options remain available and accessible throughout San Francisco is essential for making sure all young people are ready for Kindergarten and success in school.

“We are thankful to the city for their community-driven response and providing ECE providers the much needed financial relief now, especially during these incredibly difficult times associated with operating amid a global pandemic,” said Yohana Quiroz, Chief Operations Officer at the Felton Institute. “Our early educators and support staff who are essential workers, are risking their own health and safety on the front lines every day because they know how important it is for children to have a safe and caring place to interact and learn. This funding will help ECE providers to continue to provide a safe and quality learning environment for all children and support to sustain the almost 50% higher cost of operating our programs. Without financial relief, we can't and won't survive this crisis.”

“Public support and funding is vital for building a better system of early care and education post-pandemic, including building equitable, high quality early childhood systems that serve our communities and support early educators,” said Ben Wong, Executive Director, Wah Mei School. “This funding would help Wah Mei School hire more bilingual preschool teachers, preserve and protect our standing as a cultural and community anchor, and allow us to continue to serve our community of San Francisco families in need of high quality care. It has never been more clear that child care is essential for families, businesses, and the labor force. High quality early care and education is integral to the future well-being of our children and families, as well as economic recovery.”

“Much of our city’s workforce continues to struggle during the pandemic now and long-term — restaurants, retail and hospitality, to name a few — and because our workforce relies on childcare to get to work in the first place, we need to provide fundamental support to our childcare system,” Gina Frommer, Chief Executive Officer, Children’s Council of San Francisco. “This fund will help childcare operators of all types remain open and viable, and helps our entire community get back to work.”

All licensed child care or license-exempt co-operative early care programs providing services to children age birth to six in San Francisco are encouraged to apply on the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education’s (OECE) website: sfoece.org/covid-19/early-education-recovery-program/.

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