



CCCECE ShoutOut! Testimony before the Joint Budget Committee on Human Services

February 6, 2012

Sent on Behalf of Joel Gordon, CCCECE President:

Testimony before the Joint Hearing Senate Human Services And Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1 On Health And Human Services

February 1, 2012

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Community college child development departments, which have provided the bedrock for California's ECE workforce training and care for families of student parents are at great risk. The current budget crisis has caused colleges across the state to significantly alter how they can provide high-quality, timely educational experiences to students. It is both ironic and sad that while the state has turned significantly to community college ECE departments as the core of its workforce training it has, at the same time, reduced the viability of those programs. Budget cuts have had a profound effect on the community college students over the last five years and specifically on poor women. In the discipline of early childhood education we have experienced this first hand because we are the ones that operate the campus children's centers and lab schools and ultimately serve as critical gatekeepers to higher education. Without the child development services we provide single mothers simply cannot attend college. The 1987 CSU report on campus child care noted that there is simply no other student service that is more critical to a student parent's success than the availability of campus child care and early education services.

In the community college system the lab schools have routinely shortened hours, shortened days of operation, closed classrooms or closed entirely. I know off the top of my head of six campus programs that have closed or are scheduled to close by next fall. In the South Bay where there were six lab schools last year there will be only two next year. In my own program we closed one of our infant/toddler rooms this past fall thereby cutting out care for about 15 student families. With the loss of their care they were unable to continue their education.

But given the governor's budget proposal for 2012-13 I frankly don't know how we will stay open at all next fall when classes begin. Because the governor is proposing the removal of higher education as a determiner of eligibility for services we will no longer be able to serve students first. This in turn is sure to lead to a lessening or removal of any fiscal support provided by the districts. If the governor's budget passes as he submitted it, this May I will be sending termination notices to about 90 families currently using our services while they complete their studies. Among those will be:

- 35 students pursuing careers in health sciences
- 18 students pursuing careers in teaching
- 10 students pursuing careers in business
- 5 students pursuing careers in administration of justice and public safety

Of the 95 lab schools and children's centers located on our community college campuses it is doubtful that any of them will survive the governor's proposed cuts and shifts.

There is another side of this issue as well. For decades California's Community College Early Childhood Education/Child Development Departments have been the backbone of workforce education for those who teach and care for California's youngest learners. Currently 103 campuses in the system offer classes, certificates, and/or degrees in ECE. Approximately 98 of them have lab schools or campus children's centers. Child development programs have been so successful that they are now California's largest discipline for issuing career certificates and rank as the second largest for total credit awards (certificates and degrees combined). Courses are designed and taught by highly qualified faculty who work diligently to help students to bridge the world of child development theory and best practices with the workforce needs and experiences of students.

However, the budget crisis now threatens the cornerstone of early childhood teacher training, the lab school/children's center, and the supervised field experience course. This course is an essential and critical component of a course of study in child development/ECE. In virtually all districts the practicum experience serves as the capstone class in Child Development majors and certificates. Supervised field experience is a mandatory component of both the Child Development Transfer Major course sequence and the system-wide Curriculum Alignment Project. In the Transfer Major Curriculum the practicum course description states,

"Students will practice and demonstrate developmentally appropriate early childhood program planning and teaching competencies under the supervision of early childhood education/child development faculty and other qualified early education professional. Students will utilize practical classroom experiences to make connections between theory and practice, develop professional behaviors, and build a comprehensive understanding of children and families."

However, if the governor's proposed budget passes the early childhood education/child development departments will no longer have an on-campus model program strongly linked to their department where their students may fulfill the required course work and learn best practices. This will result in fewer opportunities for students to complete their studies and earn their degrees or certificates. One of the first effects of the budget cuts has been the loss of trained teachers to work with infants and toddlers. Because of their high cost the infant and toddler rooms are targeted first, so practicum experiences in infant toddler labs are quickly vanishing. The California Community College Early Childhood Educators (CCCECE) is currently preparing a survey to determine more precisely the extent of the cuts across the state.

At a time when all programs are vulnerable the lab schools stand out because of their susceptibility to California's current budget crisis. Unfortunately they are all in jeopardy. The cuts are putting community college child development programs, and especially the lab schools, in an untenable and unsustainable position. Practitioners, advocates, and policy makers must address the impact on training highly qualified educators to teach and care for the youngest children. We must develop a new system of funding our lab schools that provides for optimal learning environments for the college students and the children and families enrolled. The impact of these programs on our families, communities, and on our public education system will be profound. Our youngest citizens deserve no less.