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Assemblymember Rubio Introduces Bill to End Early Learning Suspensions and Expulsions of Children in California

(SACRAMENTO, CA) – Today, Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio (D- Baldwin Park) announced the introduction of legislation to address inequality in early education in line with the California Governors Early Learning and Care Master Plan. Assembly Bill 1361 will prohibit suspension and expulsion in preschool and childcare programs, and would strengthen early childhood mental health consultation as a means of providing support to educators and providers.

National data indicates children are expelled, suspended, and counseled out of early learning and childcare programs at much higher rates than in K-12 education. African American and Latino children, especially boys, are disproportionately impacted by this detrimental practice. This begins in preschool and persists throughout their educational journey. When children are excluded from early learning classrooms, they miss out on the opportunity to develop key social, emotional, and academic skills.

“As a former teacher myself, I believe we need to ensure all our children are given a fair opportunity to succeed in their earliest school years,” said Assemblywoman Rubio. “This bill helps address structural inequities in our early childhood education system by not only prohibiting suspensions and expulsions, but also by providing needed support to staff. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the administration on advancing this crucial piece of legislation for our children.”

“African American boys are often not given the same latitude that their white counterparts receive at the same age,” said Khieem Jackson, founding member of Black Men for Educational Equity. “Our Black children deserve an opportunity to receive a high-quality foundation to learning free of bias. This bill sets a new standard of expectation for early education providers, families of color, and more importantly our student.”

"AB 1361 is an important step in addressing the historical and structural racism that persists in California's early learning and care system. We are proud to support this legislation and look forward to working with Assembly Member Rubio to address the preschool-to-prison pipeline," said Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools.

Research indicates early childhood mental health consultation can play an important role in reducing the rate of expulsions and suspensions of children from early learning and care programs, and improve the classroom climate resulting in more positive interactions between teachers, children, and families.

“Trauma is nothing new for the families we serve in child care and preschool at Kidango, but this year has been exceptionally hard. This bill will ensure we protect children from the high rate of expulsion and suspension in public preschool and child care, while also providing the mental health supports that are proven to buffer the effects of toxic stress and trauma and support the optimal development of each child,” said Scott Moore, CEO of Kidango, an early learning nonprofit in the San Francisco Bay Area.

AB 1361 defines expulsion and suspension in preschool and childcare settings serving children 0-5 years of age that contract with the state, eliminates exclusionary practices, and provides that expulsion and suspension will only be used as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there are serious and validated safety concerns, requires the state to collect and report data on exclusionary practices, and strengthens due process for families who are impacted by suspension and expulsion. Additionally, the bill strengthens and clarifies the early childhood mental health consultation services provided for children in age 0-5 in the state preschool program and general childcare program.

By supporting educators and eliminating exclusionary policies that disproportionately harm young learners of color, this bill provides equity to all early learners, thus keeping students in school and out of the prison system, creating new success stories for the next generation of Californians.

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