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Leading Early Learning Advocates Applaud Governor Newsom for Supporting the Expansion of Transitional Kindergarten in California's 2021-22 Budget

Asm. Kevin McCarty, Early Edge California, Kidango, California School Employees Association (CSEA), and San Diego Unified School District Respond to Governor Newsom's January Budget Proposal

SACRAMENTO, CA -- Today, Governor Gavin Newsom announced his [2021-22 budget](#) for California which makes huge strides for Early Learning by starting implementation of the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and advancing toward the realization of universal preschool for all four-year-olds in the state.

Early Edge California, Kidango, California School Employees Association (CSEA), and San Diego Unified School District, sponsors of [AB 22 \(McCarty\)](#), alongside the bill's author, Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), applaud the Governor for his continued investment in our state's children and their teachers by supporting the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK).

AB 22 (McCarty) builds upon the state's landmark TK program to phase in full-day, universal pre-kindergarten by providing a year of TK for all four-year-olds while making necessary quality improvements to benefit the state's young learners and the teachers and staff who educate them. AB 22 would lower staff to student ratios to enable educators to meaningfully interact with each child and create a standard curriculum that bridges the gap between preschool and kindergarten. Importantly, AB 22 will allow nearly \$1 billion in state preschool program and Head Start funds that are currently spent on four-year-olds to serve low-income three-year-olds and infants and toddlers - a critical unmet need. This legislation, part of a [recently announced early childhood education \(ECE\) Legislative package](#), aligns with recommendations in the Governor's [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#), released in December 2020.

Governor Newsom's budget proposal begins the implementation of the Master Plan by including \$250 million in one-time incentive funds for districts to expand TK, \$200 million in one-time funding for TK and kindergarten facilities, \$50 million in one-time funding for professional development for preparing teachers for Early Childhood programs, and \$5 million to provide grants to local libraries to support Early Learning and after-school programs. The budget also provides an additional \$44 million per year for child care vouchers and \$300 million per year for the Special Education Early Intervention Grant to increase the availability of evidence-based services for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The Governor's budget also highlights the need to respond to the immediate needs of child care providers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and includes approximately \$1 billion in federal relief funding for child care that the state expects to receive as a result of the Congressional stimulus bill passed last month.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone light on the critical importance and the fragility of California's ECE system. Despite the tremendous challenges our state faces due to the ongoing health and economic crises, the Governor continues to uphold his promise to invest in our youngest children and their families, as well as the teachers and providers who support them.

"California is going to use this crisis to build back better, starting with Transitional Kindergarten for our youngest learners - preparing them for a better, shared future," said **AB 22's author Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento)**.

"Early Edge California enthusiastically applauds and thanks Governor Newsom for delivering on his commitment to making Pre-K for All a reality. We are so pleased to see this historic step forward today for California's youngest residents. It is an incredible win for the Early Learning field. The expansion of TK makes way for greater numbers of our infants and toddlers to get quality Early Learning, which science has proven gives them the very best chance at a successful future," said **Patricia Lozano, Executive Director of Early Edge California**.

"The Governor's budget makes the critical first step toward expanding TK to all four-year-olds, which will allow for Head Start and state preschool to serve up to 100,000 additional low-income three-year-olds and infants and toddlers. Research shows that the earlier we provide quality preschool and child care for our most vulnerable children, the more we close the opportunity gap, and the more successful they are in school and life," said **Scott Moore, Kidango CEO**.

"CSEA is encouraged to see Governor Newsom include funding to expand Transitional Kindergarten in his budget proposal. Our members are proud to sponsor Assemblymember McCarty's AB 22 because studies show that providing quality, consistent, and professional early education for our children prepares them for future educational and personal success. Funding preschool and Transitional Kindergarten programs in our public schools allows young children to familiarize themselves with the school at which they will be learning for years to come, is convenient for parents with multiple children to have one drop off place, and puts these early learners in front of educators who are trained to recognize those who need IEP support services," said **Ben Valdepeña, Association President of the California School Employees Association**.

"We know that access to early education is crucial to our students, and can help level the playing field when it comes to academic success in k-12 and beyond," **San Diego Unified**

Superintendent Cindy Marten said. “This program would allow children statewide to benefit from some of the same gains we’ve seen among students in San Diego Unified.”

"All three of my kids have gone through TK, and as a parent, it's so amazing to start them out in such a loving and cohesive environment. For kids to go to school, learning and loving where they're at, and being pushed to learn things that are a little more advanced, it's wonderful to see. My youngest daughter currently attends and loves it, and I'm such a fan of this program. And the teachers? I couldn't ask for better teachers. I would just tell parents you need to come to TK," said **Veronica Densley, parent from San Diego Unified School District's TK 4 Program.**

Assemblymember **Kevin McCarty**, Early Edge California, Kidango, CSEA, and San Diego Unified School District will continue to work in partnership with Governor Newsom, his Administration, and the Legislature to ensure young children thrive, families are supported, and teachers have the tools they need to serve our youngest learners. Together, we can make high-quality Early Learning accessible to ALL of California's kids.

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[Kevin McCarty](#) represents California's 7th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sacramento, West Sacramento, and unincorporated Sacramento County. McCarty serves as Chair of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance.

[Early Edge California](#) is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving access to high-quality Early Learning experiences for all California children so they can have a strong foundation for future success.

[Kidango](#) is an early learning nonprofit committed to setting every child on a path to thrive in Kindergarten and in life. As the largest childcare provider in the San Francisco Bay Area, we provide thousands of children, especially those from low-income families, with safe, healthy, nurturing environments and relationships. Our goal is to make sure all children have the social, emotional, and academic skills they need to learn, grow and realize their potential.

About the [California School Employees Association](#): Founded in 1927 by a small group of Oakland custodians focused on securing retirement benefits, the California School Employees Association is the largest classified school employee union in the United States. The member-run organization represents a quarter million school support staff who perform a wide range of essential work, including security, food services, and paraeducator services in kindergarten through 12th grade, Community Colleges, and County Offices of Education.

With more than 100,000 students and some 14,000 employees, [San Diego Unified School District](#) is California's second-largest district. San Diego Unified is a leader among urban districts when it comes to academic performance, equity, and financial stability. San Diego Unified is a majority-minority district (53 percent African American and Latino) and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of all students qualify for free and reduced lunch status based on family income. San Diego Unified is home to the largest military installation in the nation, creating unique demands on its educational programs, including its Early Learning program. San Diego Unified provides extensive wrap-around services for families.

