

## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR ALL OF CALIFORNIA'S CHILDREN

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2019

- WHEREAS, Student achievement in California continues to lag behind national averages, and there are growing achievement disparities between California and the nation among school districts serving students of lower socioeconomic standing; and
- WHEREAS, School readiness data indicates that these achievement gaps are present at school entry and so result from opportunity gaps in access to high-quality early care and education; and
- WHEREAS, California's poverty rate is one of the highest in the country, and a large percentage of California children grow up in poverty and/or in households in which the parents or guardians lack financial and educational resources; and
- WHEREAS, The rapid rates of brain development during a child's first five years of development, and especially the first three years, create the foundation for all subsequent learning; and
- WHEREAS, Research shows that early care and education reduces the need for remedial learning and special education and improves high-school completion rates; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts urge the State Legislature to develop a long-term master plan for the improvement and development of early care and education to close the achievement gap between California and other states and to close the achievement gap between student groups in California; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for public funding of early care and education for all children, and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts specifically urge the State Legislature to increase the State's investment in early care and education, so as to increase both the number of children served and the quality of the programs offered, with the goal of making high-quality, publicly funded early care and education available to all children; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts specifically urge the State Legislature to increase the State's investment in the infrastructure (including but not limited to facilities; data systems; pre-service preparation, in-service support, and adequate compensation for teachers and caregivers) required to create and sustain high-quality early care and education programs modeled on best practices in the highest-achieving states; and be it further

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**RESOLVED,** That such increased investment in early care and education should NOT be offset by, or at the expense of, reductions in the State's investment in K-12 education, higher education, nutrition, health care, or other programs that improve the lives and prospects of children and youth; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts work to inform school districts, parents, and residents of the State of California about the importance of early care and education and the benefits to the child, to the family, and to society as a whole, of providing it to all children residing in the State.

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### **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

The primary purpose of this resolution is to ask the State of California to make early care and education a priority: to develop, implement, and fund a long-term plan for supporting the learning needs of our youngest children, starting at birth. It has to be a long-term plan because California does not have the facilities, the trained teachers and caregivers, the infrastructure, or the funding to do this quickly.

In 2000, recognizing that “the years from birth to five are critically important in shaping a child’s capacity and enthusiasm for learning,” the California State PTA adopted a resolution entitled “Early Childhood Development and Education.”

Research since 2000 has greatly reinforced our understanding of the importance of early care and education for a successful life path for our children and for the benefit of our society. We now understand more fully that brain development begins before birth and that the most rapid brain development occurs in the first three years of life. High-quality, stable, responsive caregiving during early childhood has a great positive impact on child outcomes.

Research in the past 20 years tells us that age 5 is too late. Early care and education are currently all piecemeal. We need an integrated system statewide. In some places in California and elsewhere, school districts are organizing early care and education, and this may be helpful.

Early care and education reduces the need for costly remedial learning and special education in grades K through 12 and leads to higher graduation rates and a better trained workforce. Some studies have shown an added benefit: For every \$1 spent on early learning, \$7 can be saved in the K-12 system.

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**Early Care and Education for All of California's Children – continued**

While progress has been made in some places, support for young children and their parents remains spotty and is not widely available to the families that need it most. There are no “do-overs” in education. A child cannot, in grade 3, make up for a deficient grade 2, and our schools cannot, in K-12, make up for deficiencies in early learning.

Parent groups and individual parents cannot provide comprehensive early care and education for all of California's children, but the state has the ability to do it carefully and systematically, focusing on improving facilities, data systems, and preparation, support, and compensation for teachers and caregivers. There is no better time to begin than the present.