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### **20 Years Later: Child Care Remains Out of Reach for Working Families in California**

**San Francisco, CA** – Across California working families with young children face a predicament, how to find a child care arrangement that it is affordable and meets the needs of the children and parents. In the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of a biennial report on child care, the recently released 2015 California Child Care Portfolio shows that options among licensed child care facilities are limited and expensive.

Linda Asato, Executive Director of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network (Network) emphasized that, “preparing California for a prosperous future begins with recognition that our youngest children must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy. Strengthening family economic security and ensuring high quality child care options are available to the children most in need, prevents adverse experiences that stifles or negatively impacts children's optimal learning and development. California needs to care about having an adequate supply of affordable and subsidized access to child care, and to ensure that young children and their families are supported when a child's development matters most.”

According to the report, licensed child care slots statewide have fallen by 2% since 2012. “This is largely driven by the decline of licensed family child care home (FCCH) businesses,” says Rowena Kamo, Research Director at the Network. “Our data show that while center-based slots have increased slightly, the loss of family child care home slots exceeded 23,000. This means that over the course of two years, California’s child care system lost the capacity to serve over 18,000 children. The fact that these are family child care homes is also important.”

In California, a family child care home must be in the provider’s own home and reflect a home-like environment. Depending on their license, FCCH can care for up to 8 or 12 children. Additionally, based on the Portfolio, FCCH are more likely than centers to offer families more diverse schedules of care, including full-time and part-time care and care during “non-traditional” hours. In 2014, 39% of FCCH offered evening, overnight and/or weekend care, while only 2% of centers offered the same. Lastly, FCCH are more likely to have rates lower than center-based care. Kamo further commented, “like the families struggling to pay for care, FCCH providers also struggle to keep their doors open while also making their services affordable.”

**MORE**

### *Working Families*

A recent report by the Economic Policy Institute found that child care costs exceed rent in 500 out of 618 U.S. communities. Similar to other areas of the country, families in California simply cannot afford to pay for the high cost of child care. Despite increases in minimum wage around the state, the 2015 Portfolio shows that in California a family with an infant will spend more than half of their income on child care, depending on the child's age and type of care they choose. Families earning close to \$65,000 annually can spend on average between 25% and 35% of their income on child care alone.

Though the state offers subsidies to assist low-income families with child care costs, these subsidies are far and few between. In a state where over 2 million children reside in poverty, only 301,973 children were served through state subsidized care. For families able to access a subsidy, the care options available to them are limited depending on what is available in their area and what fits their needs. Given the lack of subsidies available, most parents rely on a diversity of arrangements, including relatives, friends, neighbors, nannies, and babysitters to reduce their child care costs.

### *Supporting Working Families*

The deep complexity of figuring out child care is burdensome for families, especially those in part-time jobs with unpredictable schedules. As evidenced by the Portfolio, child care options are limited and, for many, unaffordable. Shuntera Brown, a single mother of three, agrees, "my daughter has been on the waiting list for child care since she was born, so for 3 years. I have tried to work and go to school to further my education, but the high cost of child care and no subsidy, keeps me from moving forward." She also commented about the challenges for working mothers who can't remain in the workforce without reliable child care. "I was a good employee and my employer saw it. I would get complimented all the time for being such a hard worker and I was proud of this! But the only child care I could afford and could be flexible with my schedule was a family member. That person wasn't reliable and I had to call off or come in late and by the end of 8 months, I was fired."

California is in dire need of policies that support working families, like Shuntera's, to attain the stability they are working for. Efforts to rebuild the supply of family child care home businesses, to provide more subsidies for low-income families to access child care, and to support the child care workforce through adequate compensation and reimbursement rates are steps towards supporting families. Investing in these families and their children is investing in the future success of California. Having reliable, affordable quality child care is a critical piece that can hold everything together.

The *2015 Child Care Portfolio* is the 10<sup>th</sup> in a biennial series of statewide and county-by-county reports documenting licensed child care supply and demand in California. For more information and to access county-by-county data, please visit: [www.rnnetwork.org](http://www.rnnetwork.org).

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