



Clerk of the Board
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
sbcob@countyofsb.org

RE: Investing ARPA Funds in Child Care

Dear County Supervisors:

This letter is in **support of the ARPA Child Care funding** proposal submitted to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors by the Emergency Child Care Initiative (ECCI). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge economic impact on the Early Care and Education Programs in Santa Barbara County. In order to keep our preschool open we have had to apply for grants, we have taken out a loan and we have had to use our savings. We were hopeful that we would only need to make it through one year of the pandemic, but we are now in year two with no end in sight. The expenses keep adding up and unfortunately as a private non-profit preschool we were not afforded any of the moneys that were given to the subsidized programs.

Our teachers are stressed, tired and worried about working with a population that is not eligible to receive a vaccination. Our part-time staff are working full-time in order to keep our children in their individual pods. Our staff is stretched thin and we need to hire an additional teacher so that we have the coverage when a teacher is in quarantine or waiting on a COVID test, but even if we are able to find someone qualified, we don't have the money in our already strained budget to hire them.

We have a very extensive waitlist with daily inquiries about enrollment, but with the uncertainty of the pandemic we are not taking in new children and are not operating at full capacity. We are keeping the children in separate small groups, in order to keep the closures to a minimum—which keeps our parents working—but this practice continues to stretch our already thin budget.

We also continue to have the ongoing expense of purchasing cleaning supplies, PPE supplies, as well as an additional changing table, three portable sinks, blankets for nap time, etc.... We used to be an environmentally conscious preschool using washable plates, utensils and cloth napkins, but we now find ourselves following the COVID-19 guidance and purchasing disposable plates, cups and napkins. Not only is this waste adding to our overflowing landfills it has become another financial burden on our budget.

Child care is a pillar of our local infrastructure, and the economy is negatively impacted when child care is not available. I encourage the County and cities of Santa Barbara County to invest American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds in critically needed relief and recovery funds for the child care sector.

Sincerely,
Shelley Grand
Shelley Grand
Director
Zaca Center Preschool

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