

Ramirez, Angelica

Public Comment

From: Jacqui Banta <jbanta@crrsbc.org>
Sent: Monday, May 2, 2022 2:21 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Terri Allison
Subject: Public Comment 5/3/22
Attachments: Child Care in the eye of an autism mom and professional.PDF



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Good afternoon, I plan to be in-person to make public comment on the ARPA Child Care discussion and I have attached my comment for the record.

Thank you,



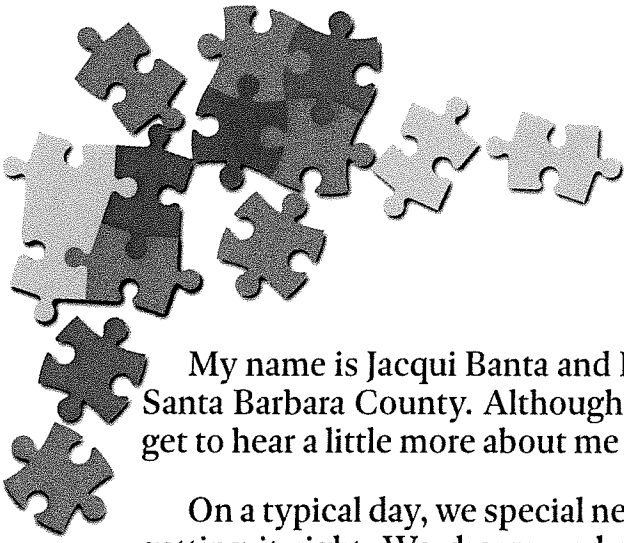
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All Children will have access to high-quality, safe, nurturing and inclusive environments that build a foundation for life-long learning.

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My name is Jacqui Banta and I am the C.O.O. at Children's Resource and Referral of Santa Barbara County. Although you may be used to me speaking globally, today you get to hear a little more about me personally.

On a typical day, we special needs parents and families struggle. We wonder if we are getting it right. We dream and worry about the future. We stay awake at night and process the trauma from the day. We pray others will love our child as much as we do. We worry if we are getting our children the right amount of support, too much support, or even if our kids are going to make it without us one day. I happen to have a child with milder challenges, but it's still a different kind of journey finding child care and educational options that do not require an absolute fight just to get to ground zero.

Throughout the pandemic, we saw children with disabilities regress in skills that took months or even years to develop. A child who is that delayed in learning is under water gasping for air. That is what it can feel like as a special needs parent without strong support systems in place: we are left gasping, grabbing, fighting for our lives.

Between IEP's, OT, SLT, PT, RSP and the many more commitments of a special needs parent, we are also expected to hold down full time jobs. If you do not know what those acronyms mean; be grateful. COVID-19, for most people, sent parents over the edge. Special Needs parents were now in an impossible position, hanging upside down and praying someone would catch us. Without access to safe, inclusive, affordable child care and a flexible schedule—I would have lost my job and I would have had to start all over again. Family Child Care was my lifeline throughout the pandemic. From distance learning to safe socialization; my family survived because we had reliable, safe, quality child care.

We have seen a mass exodus of women in the workplace over the past two years because they didn't and continue not to have access to safe, affordable, quality child care. We have 1 space for every 6 infants and 1 space for every 2 preschool aged children in our county—you add special needs into that ratio and the access diminishes even further.

I plead with our county to see families like mine and women like me to invest in the child care sector and help us simply get to ground zero.

Jacqui Banta

COO Children's Resource & Referral
of Santa Barbara County

