Dear Assembly Member Mitchell:

On behalf of First 5 LA, I am writing to state our support for AB 1673, which would ensure 12 months of continuous access to child care and other Department of Education programs for young children from low-income families.

First 5 LA, a child advocacy and public grant making organization, was created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues to improve the lives of children from prenatal through age five in Los Angeles County. One of our goals is to promote public policy that expands access to early care and education programs in California.

Young children and their families benefit when they have access to stable, continuous child care arrangements. Stable child care enables parents to retain employment needed to support their families, while young children benefit from consistent care that fosters healthy development. During the current economic recession, consistent child care arrangements can provide a secure environment for young children whose families are struggling more than ever to make ends meet. High quality child care helps children learn and develop skills they need to be successful in school and in life.

AB 1673 would require a 12-month eligibility period for several state child care programs, including state preschool (full and part-day), the migrant child care program, and CalWORKs (except for Stage 1). This would serve to eliminate the disruption in services which often occurs due to minor changes in a family's circumstances such as minor variations in income. The bill would also impose limited interim reporting requirements for families enrolled in these programs. These changes will make the eligibility process more efficient for working parents who need these services.
The bill would also reduce the administrative burden on programs, which must invest substantial time and resources in following up with families for verification of their continued eligibility due to changes in life circumstances. This is particularly important during uncertain economic times when employers are downsizing their staff and families have varying work schedules that may produce fluctuations in their income from month to month.

Children in high-quality child care demonstrate better school outcomes, including higher vocabulary scores, math and language abilities, and success in school. Ensuring children have uninterrupted access to child care settings can help facilitate this learning and development. For these reasons, we support the passage of AB 1673.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Steele
Interim Chief Executive Officer
First 5 LA

cc: California Assembly and Senate - Los Angeles County delegation