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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**SAN FRANCISCO LAUNCHES NEW DEPARTMENT OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD**

New department will provide children under six and their families with a robust early childhood system of support and dedicate nearly \$300 million to support early educators, children, and families

San Francisco, CA -- Mayor London N. Breed and Supervisor Myrna Melgar today announced the launch of the City's new Department of Early Childhood (DEC), which is the product of a merger between the Office of Early Care and Education (OECE) and First 5 San Francisco. DEC is the first fully integrated early childhood system of its kind in the state, and solidifies San Francisco as a leader in early care and education.

With the DEC, San Francisco will build a more robust and streamlined system with expanded access to quality early care and education services, promote equity to reach those in most need, and invest in the City's youngest children to set them up for success and improve childhood outcomes. DEC will continue prioritizing San Francisco's significant investments in children under six and their families. New and expanded initiatives include:

- More than \$70 million annually for the early care and education workforce to increase educators' compensation, recruitment, retention, and benefits. These investments will raise the pay rate for City-funded educators to a minimum of \$28 per hour.
- More than \$180 million annually to support families with access to affordable high-quality early child care and education programs.
- More than \$40 million annually to increase subsidy rates for child care and support for early intervention, child wellness, and early literacy services.

"In San Francisco, we are committed to working harder to put children and families first," said Mayor London Breed. "The new Department of Early Childhood simplifies the delivery of services, making it easier for all families to access programs and get the support they need. This will allow our City to efficiently deliver the critical funding to our childcare providers and families that can help our children thrive."

DEC was formed by legislation introduced in July 2022 by Mayor Breed and Supervisor Myrna Melgar, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors and signed into law by Mayor Breed in September. The new ordinance went into effect on Saturday, October 8, 2022.



“This department is a first of its kind in the State, and I am proud that we are again leading the way, creating the necessary systems and that puts San Francisco on its way to being one of the first major cities to offer universal early care and education. We have long known how critical access to quality early care and education is for working parents and their children, especially families most in need and who suffered exacerbated disparities because of the pandemic. With DEC, we will be able to deliver on the vision and promise of improved outcomes for our children and honor the hard work of all of those who have long fought in this field. Our commitment remains strong to continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure we set parents and children on a path towards success,” stated Supervisor Myrna Melgar.

With a focus on prevention locally and statewide, DEC has begun to bring attention to the needs of children ages zero through five, and their families. Research shows how critical the early years are for children's long-range health, well-being, and school success. Historically, young children have largely been ignored in policy and budget debates statewide. Through voter-approved "baby" Prop C and the creation of the DEC, San Francisco underscores the importance of focusing on children under six and their families.

"Through DEC, we are working to create an equitable early childhood experience by prioritizing children and families with the greatest need while ensuring meaningful and relevant support is available to all," said Ingrid Mezquita, Executive Director of the Department of Early Childhood. "DEC brings together the city's diverse services and resources and lifts families' voices, creating a community who care for and about young children."

DEC will support early intervention programs and prevention services for young children, parent leadership and community building, and wage enhancements and professional development for early educators. Significant new funding for our city's children and families preserves San Francisco's legacy as a champion for young children and their families. Moreover, it ensures our enduring role in supporting and sustaining preventive programs and services across education, health, and family support.

DEC provides a roadmap for the City's early childhood system to continue advancing and promoting access to high-quality services and support for all families. A major component of a thriving early childhood system is ensuring that early educators receive pay raises, an issue that Mayor Breed addressed when she launched the early educator workforce compensation initiative earlier this year.

"This is fantastic for early educators and programs like mine," said Monique Guidry, Family Child Care & Early Care Educator. "As a Family Child Care Educator, my business is run from home, but it is becoming increasingly harder to fend off the rising cost of living in San Francisco." She added, "Early Educators have always been burdened with meager wages, so a pay increase certainly eases some of the stress of staying in the city where I was born and raised, as well as it helps me ensure my children continue to receive the high-quality education they deserve."



The creation of DEC is also part of the [Mayor's Children and Family Recovery Plan](#). The Recovery Plan, which Mayor Breed released in February of 2022, is a set of strategies that create a three-to-five-year Citywide roadmap of ways to support children and their families. Included in the Recovery Plan are recommendations to streamline the continuum of care and communication about Citywide services for children. DEC aims to accomplish those goals.

In tandem with the establishment of DEC, the Children and Families First Commission and the Early Childhood Community Oversight and Advisory Committee will help guide the department and promote public engagement. DEC remains committed to engaging with, listening to, and seeking advice from the community and providers in the field. [More information about DEC may be found here](#).

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