



Lynn Merz, Commission Chair
Zea Malawa, Commission Vice Chair
Theresa Zighera, Interim Executive Director

COMMISSIONERS:
Aline Armstrong
Linda Asato
E'leva Hughes Gibson
Supervisor Myrna Melgar
Joan Miller
Maria Su

SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES SAN FRANCISCO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

DATE: Wednesday, January 19, 2022

TIME: 4:30pm – 6:30pm

PLACE: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81850303451>

Zoom Public Access Number: US: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or

+1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799

Webinar ID: 818 5030 3451

Public Comment Email: First5sf@first5sf.org

1. Call to order

The commission meeting was called to order at 4:34 pm.

2. Roll call

Commissioners Present: Lynn Merz, Zea Malawa, Aline Armstrong, Linda Asato, Maria Su, E'leva Hughes-Gibson (4:44 arrival), and Supervisor Myrna Melgar (5:06 arrival)

Commissioners Absent: Joan Miller

Staff Present: Ingrid Mezquita, Theresa Zighera

3. Approval of Resolution Making Finding to Allow Teleconference Meetings for San Francisco Children and Families Commission under California Government Code Section 54953 (e) until next 30-day review, having considered the circumstances of the state of emergency and the local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing.

Staff presented information to support the Commission determining the required findings, namely that the Mayor and San Francisco Public Health Officers continue to prohibit San Francisco boards and commissions from meeting in person in consideration of the ongoing state of emergency, and in order to ensure public safety.

There was no further discussion.

There was no public comment.

A motion to approve findings and allow teleconference meetings for San Francisco Children and Families Commission under California Government Code Section 54953 (e) until next 30 day review, having considered the circumstances of the state of emergency and that local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing, was made by Commissioner Malawa and second by Commissioner Su. The motion carried unanimously and was approved unanimously at 4:36 pm.

4. General public comment:

There was no public comment

5. Overview and discussion of the Children First Ballot Measure (Discussion Item)

Update on Children First Measure was shared by Mayor Chief of Staff Sean Elsbernd and Maria Su. Highlights included:

- Assurance that the Mayor has heard the community concerns loud and clear and will not be presenting anything further to the Board of Supervisors until there has been a much broader community discussion and input process.
- The Measure will be presented to the Rules Committee as scheduled but there will be an amendment to it presented that will remove all language pertaining to the proposed Children's Agency. Language and components surrounding the Board of Education and school district compliance will remain.
- The Mayor is very interested in engaging in conversations about how to improve city services, service delivery, and departmental collaboration. There remains an intention to put forth a measure on the November ballot.
- Appreciation was expressed for the time and input community members provided in the last few weeks and the conversations that have been initiated.

Commissioners discussed:

- Process, rationale, and purpose behind initiation of the Children First measure and concerns that legislative processes in San Francisco are often not inclusive of, and impactful for, communities of color, especially Black and Pacific Islander residents; consequently policies then further marginalize these groups.
- Observation that structures currently exist to address the issues brought forth in the Children First Measure and there are working examples of collaboration within and across the early childhood sectors; may not be necessary to create something new, but rather more effectively utilize existing structures. Also noted that areas that are working require more capital, resources, and capacity.
- Importance of, and strategies to ensure, mutual accountability across city departments, funded non-profit organizations, school district and Board of Education; utilizing future legislation and school district policy enhancements to build equity and anti-racist practices within the public school system.

- Hope for greater collaboration and connection between schools and community to better coordinate supports and services to children and families for access to those resources that schools and school districts are not able to provide.
- Need to maximize structures that both ensure collaboration, coordination, and accountability while also allowing a degree of autonomy for effective and efficient implementation.

Public Comments:

Maria Luz Torre, Parent Voices San Francisco

We have been organizing parents to advocate for child care and early education for the last 26 years. When we heard about this proposal, this proposition in December, we had some concerns, but we didn't really see the language until January. We do have serious concerns about creating another layer of bureaucracy. If we have to, I think we need to talk to all the departments concerned, the community, the parents, the providers who will be impacted by this.

We also are concerned that we passed Prop C in June 2018 and yet, we have not spent the money. We want to spend that money right away so that our children on the waiting list could get child care. We also know that the ruling was held up in court, it was challenged, so we could not really spend it and then we worked to pass Prop F to release those funds.

Now, we are part of the strategic planning process deciding how this is going to happen. Parents from Parent Voices are also in that process and other parents participate in input sessions and focus groups and so we felt that finally we were moving, and then we heard this is happening which could mean another delay that will create another layer of bureaucracy.

So, we are very concerned. We hope that we take a more serious look at this with input from the community and all the stakeholders and see what we really need to do. Maybe the Department of Early Childhood that is already being created can do its job, just give it a chance. Thank you.

Naeemah Charles, Children's Council of San Francisco and the San Francisco Early Care and Education Advocacy Coalition.

We are happy to see that the part about the Children's Agency is going to be taken out of the ballot proposal. However, we still want to see the language to know if there is any impact on early care and education that is expected. As this did not have any community engagement in initial drafting, we have to be really intentional about that now since we are playing catch-up.

We also wanted to raise some concerns about this possibly coming back for the November ballot. We just want to raise a concern about community engagement and being really intentional. Right now, we have babies in the hospital with COVID. Omicron is really impacting us at a level we have not seen previously. We have providers trying to keep their doors open. We have the Department of Early Childhood merger. We have so many other things to do as a community. We have met with Maria Su and Sean Elsbernd and many others, and and we have not heard a reason for the urgency around this and why we cannot take our time to have true community engagement.

Something we have heard on this call too is this piece around accountability and creating more cohesion among departments. There is also a question there we want to look at. Is a charter amendment really necessary to have that, or is there a way that departments can figure out an alternative route? When we talk about accountability and look at data across a state we see that licensed childcare sites have had a 17% decrease in enrollment. In San Francisco, we have increased enrollment at licensed sites by 20%. That's a 40% difference. We know how to be accountable for ourselves as an early care and education community, and we really want the city to trust that, to have full community engagement and to just be really intentional about our early care and education dollars and funding. We welcome change as a community, but what is number one important to us, is that whatever change we do is in the best interest of our children. Thank you.

Liz Winograd, Low Income Investment Fund and San Francisco Childcare Planning and Advisory Council

There was a mention earlier in the conversation that the Mayor heard that this was going too fast. In fact, we do believe that this definitely happened very quickly, but what I would like to be clear about is that what was most devastating to the early care and education community was the fact that this was done behind closed doors. Not only was there not community engagement, there was no collaboration with our Office of Early Care and Education, and I think that has been pretty harmful to our community.

With that said, we appreciate seeing that the Children's Agency has been taken out of this, but again, why are we moving this quickly? We do embrace change. We went from funding moving from the Department of Children Youth and Families, to First 5, then moving into its own Office of Early Care and Education. By July 1, we will be merging First 5 and the Office of Early Education to become a new department. Give us a chance. Give a chance to this new department, under our director Mezquita's leadership to make it work. I think that November could still be a bit too soon to look at developing this Children's Agency. Allow us to show that we can create a great department with the accountability that the Mayor needs.

Moving forward, these conversations still need to happen. If something needs to happen for November, then we need to have some conversations about what this would look like and why we are rushing towards it. Thank you.

Monica Walters, Wu Yee Children's Services

Thank you for allowing us to have a public comment on this very important topic. I just want to thank the Commissioners and certainly Ingrid Mezquita and Maria Su for engaging with us and listening to our concerns. We met with many of the Board of Supervisors and with Sean Elsbernd and I think our field of early care and education providers were all passionate advocates. That is one of the reasons Prop C passed in the first place - because we were out there encouraging the public to vote to get behind our children and the need for more early care and education, more access. The three legs of the stool for early education and for many programs are access, workforce, and facilities.

We need to build capacity across the system and that does take a lot of collaboration from many different departments. We also know one thing we learned through COVID is how important working with our Public Health systems is in order to keep our kids healthy and safe.

So, I just want to reiterate that the field - if I could speak for most of my colleagues at Early Head Start, Head Start, as well as my other Title V colleagues - that we want to collaborate. We want to be a part of the solution, but we also need the opportunities to bring our parents in and to bring our consumers and our stakeholders in.

If we really want to build a true community - one where all kids have that opportunity that is critical for their success, cradle-to-career - then we must slow down. Allow us to get a good foot underneath our new Department of Early Childhood. Help us get through this pandemic. Of the 12 sites that we have at Wu Yee, eight of them are experiencing closures right now due to COVID and it is scary. We need to get through this and then we need to get into a place where we can really, as a community, listen to one another and have our parents really be a big part of that process. To me parent voice is everything and so is the voice of the workforce. Thank you.

(2nd Public Comment from Monica Walters) I think the whole issue of accountability has been brought up a couple of times, or many times. Those of us who are highly regulated having federal state and local dollars know what that means. I think we need to come together in collaboration and talk about what sort of accountability measures we really want to look at. Sometimes, one public entity believes this is the important thing to prioritize and hold accountable and somebody else has something else. This is another important part of the community collaboration process. What are the key points that we all agree on that we have to be measuring and tracking and being accountable for? This is a big part of the conversation and it is hard, but it is something that has to happen. Looking at the hard data of Black and Brown children being left behind so many times, please know that those of us in the SF Early Care and Education Advocacy Coalition, all of us, are working towards making changes there. We have those priorities high in our own goals. That is an important thing to note.

Jenny Pearlman, Safe & Sound and San Francisco Family Resource Center Alliance

I am also very grateful that you have given us this opportunity to come before you today and provide public comment, that you really listened to community response and community input, and the fact that there is more community input needed in this process. We are grateful that you have been able to pivot, are doing that, and we look forward to working with you in the future on how we can reach our goals of all better supporting kids and families.

One thing we want to lift up in this conversation is the essential role that the families play in the outcomes for children. We want to make sure that whatever happens in the reorganization of departments, or how departments better work together, that the family is also central so that we support families, and especially BIPOC families, in the way that families should be supported in culturally responsive and linguistically responsive ways. We know that family resource centers been able to touch the lives of forty thousand participants in the last year. We also know that over the past 10 years, there's been a 60% reduction in substantiated cases of child abuse in San Francisco and family resource centers have been essential to those outcomes. We want to make sure that whatever reorganization happens, families are central to that. Thank you.

Alex Maykowski, Children's Council of San Francisco

Thanks so much for having us, letting us comment, and considering how these proposed amendments are going to affect our children and families. Thank you, Commissioner Su,

for being so willing to always talk to the community, hearing our concerns, and pumping the brakes on this amendment.

I want to reiterate some of the things that my colleagues in the San Francisco Early Care and Education Advocacy Coalition have said. I think it is just so important to have community engagement. Obviously, we did not have that in this process leading up to here. I think it is still somewhat concerning to hear that it might try to end up again on the November ballot. That really only gives us until May.

I think when we look back at past charter amendments, we see sometimes there has been years of community engagement and I just think it is so important. The children's movement in San Francisco is all about community input. It is the community being able to have a voice in these things - and not just folks that are in the coalition, but providers, children, and families - that is so important. It is really the cornerstone of what we have been able to build in the children's movement.

It is going to take time to have this robust kind of community engagement that we are looking for. I hope that gets considered and I also hope you get some time to see what the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) can do. We haven't been able to see what DEC can do, and I think it is going to be helpful as we look to make changes of what works and what does not work. Let us see what DEC can do and then move from there. I hope we can continue to pump the brakes and have these discussions like we are having right now because San Francisco does have a great system. It is a national model in a lot of these areas. I hope we can continue that legacy. We can continue to be that kind of national model working together.

Jennifer Curran, Mimi and Peter Haas Fund

We are a private family foundation in San Francisco that has been working in collaboration with the early care and education field for over 30 years to support the early care and education system in San Francisco.

First, I would like to acknowledge all of your incredible commitment to the children and families of San Francisco. I appreciate all that you do. On behalf of the Fund, I want to applaud the decision to slow down this process and really engage the community in a thoughtful and very important discussion. I think, from our perspective, we have had many conversations with the field and stakeholders and grantees over the last several weeks and overwhelmingly, we heard that the field was left behind. And we want to ensure that moving forward, all key early care and education stakeholders are at the table so that their voices are heard.

I think this is incredibly relevant now in COVID. The field and its providers have been working tirelessly over the last almost two years now to support children and families in San Francisco. They have been so focused on day-to-day work that they are exhausted. I think we need to allow the time and space for that process to happen and make sure that their voices are heard.

Second, I really want to underscore the importance of seeing the merger of the Office of Early Care and Education and First 5 San Francisco through. I know this was mentioned on the call earlier this evening, but I just want to reiterate the importance that the Department of Early Childhood is able to continue on the path to be created and formed by July 1st.

Lastly, I would like to have on record that it is incredibly important for the Department of Early Childhood to have requisite authority and control over all 0-5 funding streams, that includes the field's portion of PEEF, Prop 10, and Prop C. We at the Fund really want to make sure that that happens, and we are here to support the process in any way that we can. Thank you.

Laura Belyavski, community member and former Preschool Teacher

As of this fall, I have started attending Childcare Planning and Advisory Council meetings and getting involved. I have been so impressed and awed by the existing people and community and structures that are in place: the anti-racist work; the commitment to the children, parents, caregivers, and educators of San Francisco; the caliber of expertise, kindness, and attention to detail that the whole community brings; and the collaborative nature of the different organizations that I have witnessed while still only touching the surface.

As a community member, I was surprised to hear about this measure coming to be without touching that rich framework that already exists. I am eager to follow along and spread this news within the San Francisco community, because I think that as talked about, the Mayor is interested in bringing in the voices of the educators and advocates that already exist. I am curious if the Mayor will bring in those voices when considering the timeline as well. It seems that the community, and the expertise they bring, would be able to best advise on a timeline that would be most realistic to download that richness of experience into something that would serve San Franciscans of all backgrounds; rather than adding - as people close to that work have said - layers of bureaucracy and people who perhaps do not have that experience. In a rushed manner this may particularly harm our most vulnerable communities even if the intention is good.

As a community member, I ask the Mayor for a decision to generously and appropriately take into consideration the voices of the teams that currently exist and that she also take into consideration their voices when it comes to the timeline. Thank you.

Sara Hicks-Kilday, Early Care Educators of San Francisco

Many of my comments have been said already so I will just echo the ones that I want to come across strongly and one is to have community participation. We need to slow down, especially if we want participants, who are working a full day taking care of children, and are the ones that are the least heard. We need to make the places that they can come in and really speak. To get this right, we really need to be able to do that.

I really would like to look at what went wrong with the process with Our Children Our Families. To get it right I also need to understand that better. One thing that has been spoken to is the number of different departments we want to engage, the number of different departments that have pieces that serve children. It is certainly not just the Department of Children Youth and Their Families and the new Department of Early Childhood, but those other departments are not mentioned in the measure. SFUSD, we know, but Parks and Rec Department others that we might want to bring in.

The other piece as an educator, and as an educator of educators, that I wish you would look at is - people do things, people change, when it does something that helps them do the work that is so important to them. I am concerned when I look at the model of the Children's Agency that the way to get the power that I read in there is punitive, i.e.

money will be taken away if you do not do this, and I am concerned about that as a model.

Sometimes it is true. There are people that are acting out of laziness, sort of, but that is not Ingrid [Mezquita, Office of Early Care and Education]. That is not Theresa [Zighera, First 5 San Francisco]. That is not Maria [Su, Department of Children Youth and Their Families]. I think people who really want to serve children will come forward if we look at a model that speaks to what people really need to get done, and have that at the core of the model. I am not sure that needs to be another agency, but I did hear frustration that Our Children Our Families was not working. I would like to take more time with that to think about what will really bring out the people that are underserved, the people who really need to be at the center of the conversation, and the departments that serve them, and their desire to serve those people and families and children. That has to be what is at the heart of this, and that is not what I was reading in it. The time to really frame and talk with the communities that we are intentional about - and the time to really have that at the heart of whatever it is - I think that would bring this forward. Thank you.

Gina Fromer, Children's Council of San Francisco

I want to applaud the strong comments about the underlying factors that are played out in our City. Yes, we might have more of a hand in it right now, in the design and development, but later what system policy will be in place to protect the most vulnerable populations?

I know this is the Mayor's intention - to make sure that our systems and our policies are not reinforcing any racism or sexism, or against the people that are recipients of these services. We could talk all day long about this, but I do know that everything that has been said today is critical in what our community sees us doing as well. We were arguing about something that maybe should not be at this point, but the community is watching how we act, and the community is watching how we engage, and I just want to be mindful of that. I will sit at any table with my colleagues to discuss and design something that is going to reinforce systems that will benefit the community.

The last comment is that I really want to see the merger of the Department of Early Childhood work. I do not know what is going to happen above it, around it, or in between it, but I would like to see what the vision was initially and if that is going to actually work. Also, I would like to see the Department of Children Youth and Their Families more engaged in this zone, so we can truly have a 0 to 24 system, because what we have learned is that families are not one-size-fits-all. They come in all sizes and shapes. Teenagers going to school, the mom that just had a baby, all these things are connected. There is a need for that, and I thought Our Children Our Families was that. I just want to reinforce that there is a need for collaboration and communication among city departments, especially education. Thank you.

Oscar Tang, Family Child Care Association of San Francisco

I just want to bring up the point about language justice and language access. It is really important. All these changes are coming through. We heard about it from another meeting, but there is no Chinese language about this. I do not know if there is anything about it in the Spanish language either. For us - our family child care providers - we come with all different needs, experiences and languages and we serve all different families. If this is going to impact us, we want to make sure all of our stakeholders know

what is happening. Is there a website that we can share right now that has translations of these materials that are being discussed?

Yohana Quiroz, Felton Institute

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment this afternoon and for putting a pause on the charter and the component on the early care and education piece. But I also wanted to share that the early care and education field has been through so much change over the last few months. Not only the California Department of Education has transitioned a big part of our contracts to the California Department of Social Services, but now we are also going to be merging First 5 San Francisco and the Office of Early Care and Education. We are asking just for time for those pieces to come to a place and for the new department to come together to see what it can do.

There has been a lot of change and transition, and if we think back of what has been the last two years, there has been a lot of issues that we have been addressing. There are a lot of issues that we have been addressing around COVID that - under Ingrid Mezquita's leadership and Theresa Zigehra's leadership with our two-generation approach, which a lot of the ECE programs already do – we have been able to successfully meet the needs of the communities that we are serving. We are just asking for more time, and I am not even sure that November seems like the right time. I would urge all of us to think about pausing even further to allow the Office of Early Care and Education and First 5 to merge to see what it can do with the implementation of Prop C, as well as all the other changes.

I appreciate again Ingrid Mezquita's leadership. Despite COVID, she has done a tremendous job providing guidance, support, and leadership, and being a voice for early care and education directly to the Mayor. We know that we have a go-to person in the City that we can express our concerns and our challenges, and we want to continue to do that. I think the department has intentionally built a response, and has been listening to the unique needs of the community in terms of early care and education. So, again, I would suggest or encourage us to think even beyond the November timeline. Allow two to three years to go by. Allow this new department to come together and do its thing. Thank you so much for the time.

Patricia Sullivan, Family Child Care Association of San Francisco

Thank you so much for allowing me to speak. I just wanted to speak on behalf of the family child care providers and the African American early care and education community. I wanted to thank Dr. Zea Malawa for her comments. You are exactly where we need you to be, and Ingrid Mezquita, without you, we would not still be here. So, thank you very much, and the rest of the panel, give us a break. It has been hard enough. A lot of us are closed. A lot of us are scared. I appreciate and understand that you are worried about what is happening, but nobody is more worried than we are.

I would appreciate it if you give us the time to get it together. That would be really helpful. I know and I understand that the Mayor is very concerned. If you do not know enough about us to be able to know what we are doing, then maybe you should take the time to do that. We have been hearing that some Supervisors and representatives of the Mayor's Office are not aware of how much work we have done during COVID, and that is as disturbing as it could be. We started this thing as workers essential to the field and now we are in positions where we have to fight for autonomy, and we should not have to

do that. We have so much to bring to the field, and we need to have the time to be able to do that. Thank you.

There was no further public comment.

There was no further discussion.

6. Committee Updates:

- a. Fiscal Committee: No meeting
- b. Program Committee: No meeting
- c. Policy and Planning Ad Hoc Committee: It was a Commissioner request during the December Policy Planning Ad Hoc Committee to hear more about the Children First Measure that lead to this Special Commission meeting.

7. Commissioner Updates

No Commissioner Updates.

8. Interim Executive Director Update

No Interim Executive Director Update

9. Adjourn

The commission meeting was adjourned at 6:19pm.