[DATE]

The Honorable Senator Leyva

Chair, Senate Education Committee

State Capitol, Room 4061

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 959 (Hurtado) –Educational equity: immigration and citizenship status – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Leyva,

The [ORGANIZATION NAME] is pleased to support SB 959 (Hurtado), which would extend “safe space” policies to early childhood programs in order to protect the safety, privacy, and well-being of young children and their families.

[ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION]

As Californians try to navigate living under pandemic conditions, California’s essential workers have been on the front lines providing key services that allow others to stay safe at home. In order to do this critical work, essential workers – 1 in 3[[1]](#footnote-1) of whom are immigrants – have continued sending their children to child care providers who have remained open to serve them and other children who are particularly vulnerable to social, emotional, and physical impacts of COVID-19.

SB 959 (Hurtado) would require the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide early childhood development (ECD) programs – like daycares, preschools, and early childhood centers – with information about a child’s right to be safely enrolled regardless of their immigration status. The information provided will include “Know Your Rights” information and model “safe space” policies “developed by the Attorney General. CDE will also help ECD programs provide this information to the children and families they serve in their primary language. This bill expands upon AB 699 (O’Donnell), enacted in 2018, which was also a response to hostile federal climate, and provides protections for students and families enrolled in K-12 schools.

[INSERT IMPORTANCE OF ISSUE TO YOUR WORK]

ECD programs play a critical role in the development and wellbeing of young children, including supporting the language, literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional competencies needed for a smooth transition into kindergarten and later life success.[[2]](#footnote-2) But the continued proliferation of federal anti-immigrant policies stretching from heightened immigration enforcement activities, changes to public charge policy, and promises of massive raids, have created a climate of fear that has detrimentally impacted the ability of early childhood programs to serve immigrant families. As a result of these policies, young children, most of them citizens, are experiencing significant increased symptoms of anxiety and stress, and their families are increasingly wary of utilizing essential public benefits, services, and programs, including early childhood education.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The impact of hostile immigration policies on young children and their families is especially alarming in California, where nearly half of California’s three million children under five years old are children of immigrants, and three in every five pre-school age children of immigrants attend a child care center.[[4]](#footnote-4)

This bill aims to reduce childhood trauma related to immigration so young children can learn and grow without the added stressors. California has the opportunity to focus its efforts on ensuring children in immigrant families are able to achieve their full potential through access to high quality early educational experiences and other supports that promote healthy development.

For these reasons, [ORGANIZATION NAME] supports SB 959 (Hurtado) and respectfully asks for your AYE vote in Senate Education Committee.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

[TITLE[

Cc: Members, Senate Education Committee

 Senator Melissa Hurtado, author

1. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2018. Available at<https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/search?ds=ACSPUMS1Y2018&cv=NAICSP&rv=ucgid,SOCP&nv=CIT&wt=PWGTP&g=0400000US06> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Melnick, Hanna, T. Tinubu Ali, Madelyn Gardner, Anna Maier, and Marjorie Wechsler. "Understanding California’s early care and education system." Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute (2017).

https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Understanding\_CA\_Early\_Care\_Education\_System\_REPORT.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wendy Cervantes, Rebecca Ulrich, and Hanna Matthews. “Our Children’s Fear: Immigration Policy’s Effects on Young Children.” CLASP, March 2018, available at

https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/our-childrens-fear-immigration-policys-effects-young-children [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Children’s Partnership and Early Edge California. “The Effect of Hostile Immigration Policies on California Children’s Early Childhood Development,” November 2019, available at <https://www.childrenspartnership.org/research/the-effect-of-hostile-immigration-policies-on-california-childrens-early-childhood-development/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)