**[Insert Date]**

The Honorable Anthony Portantino, Chair

Senate Appropriations Committee

State Capitol, Room 2206

Sacramento, CA 95814

# RE: SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 324 (AGUIAR-CURRY)

 **AS AMENDED JUNE 27, 2019**

Dear Senator Portantino:

**[Insert organization name]** supports AB 324, the Dion Aroner Child Care Workforce Act of 2019, which would link the guidelines for professional support stipends provided under the AB 212 program to the Administration’s guidelines for the new Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program established in the 2019–20 Budget Act, to support the professional development and educational attainment of the early childhood education (ECE) workforce.

Research shows that quality child care is critical to a child’s development and lifelong wellbeing. However, quality child care programs are in high demand, and many parents are unable to find affordable and quality options for their children. Much of the problem is due to a shortage in the child care workforce, which can be partially attributed to low wages and lack of professional supports for providers.

The original goal of the AB 212 program was to improve the retention of qualified child development employees who work directly with children in state-subsidized, Title 5 child development programs. The program also provides a range of services based on local plans: increased staff compensation and benefits, tutoring and mentorship support, school financial aid assistance, career counseling, professional staff development, and access to higher education for the staff who work directly with young children on a daily basis.

Almost twenty years later, with limited guidance provided in law and from the California Department of Education (CDE), AB 212 program implementation varies widely throughout the state. Large inconsistencies exist in the intentionality of the programs, the resources and support provided to educators, and measurements of success. These inconsistencies have led to varying levels of support and retention of ECE staff. AB 212 professional support stipends play a crucial role in the ECE system, and the program requires clearly defined goals and implementation strategies in order to ensure its success.

The 2019–20 Budget Act designates $195 million for the new Early Learning and Care Workforce Development Grants Program and develops guidelines for the use of the funds. AB 324 would require CDE to create guidelines for the use of AB 212 funds that align to the standards governing the new Workforce Development Grants. Together, these guidelines will help create a standardized, effective, and measurable funding program, while still allowing for local flexibility.

AB 324 would support diversity in the early care and education profession and strengthen and improve the quality and craft of our child care workforce, in order to support child development and working family needs. For these reasons, **[insert organization name]** is pleased to support AB 324.