



February 2023

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the Community Partners team that conducted an hour interview with you individually or in small groups, thank you. Your openness, insights, and willingness to share and discuss ideas brought to our attention a wide variety of topics and issues. We will be working on and considering this wealth of material as we move forward with First 5 LA's Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy Fund (EC PAF) over the coming five years.

Following are the rich findings from the 50+ individuals who shared time and knowledge in interviews over Zoom between July 2022 and February 2023.

### **Racial, Social, and Economic Justice are Critical Themes and Throughlines**

- There was emphasis on both creating and building supports for young children, their families and providers, etc., AND dismantling the many harms long faced by these groups, often on a daily basis. Building supports and the dismantling of continuing harms have to be done simultaneously – one does not supersede the other
- Context, culture, and history influence how and what happens within and to marginalized communities. Intersectionally, these have substantial impacts on “Whole Child/Whole Family” (children, families, providers, etc.)
- Centuries of colonization and harm done to Indigenous populations on the mainland and in territories (e.g., Pacific Islands, etc.), and the centuries of enslavement and myriad other harms (e.g., rampant racism and practices of second-class citizenship, etc.) done to African Americans, and the evolution and remnants of these large omnipresent fundamental forces throughout the society have significant bearing on the creation and implementation of policy work. Still largely not considered, these forces create and support policies and implementation that often do not work for historically marginalized children, families, and communities
- Everyone has the right to become visible, be heard, and be treated with human dignity, care, and respect

- (From a history paper we commissioned from Patricia Karimi-Taleghani, September, 2022): Among other things, there is a multi-century history in the U.S. of generally treating the well-being of women and children as being of lesser value or concern—as one author has written, women and children historically have been “pitied but not entitled<sup>1</sup>.” This has been a level of disregard and neglect, by intention and design, that for centuries has failed women and children, low-income families, families of color, and others historically marginalized
- There are serious, continuing, and strong stressors – especially many forms of economic hardship, lack of needed services, as well as cultural/racial stressors (e.g., for families and children who are immigrants, undocumented, un-housed, under-fed, medically underserved, people of color, persons who are routinely exploited and with no safety net, etc.). Stressors can negatively impact the physical, mental, developmental, and emotional health and well-being of children, families, early care providers, and others
- The questions were raised: What is being done to eliminate racial disparities in treatment and outcomes in this field? AND, specifically and unapologetically, what is being done to eliminate anti-Black racism?
- Many systems (systems intersect) will need to be re-structured and re-designed with human rights, justice, dignity, and an economic floor/safety net as part of the core
- Just working on today’s landscape (including the impacts of COVID) does not fix the long history of redlining and other discrimination in housing, education, healthcare, and systems of economics, justice, politics, etc. In not understanding the histories of particular groups/communities/populations, one cannot adequately understand the problem. Racism, colonization, gender, and income inequities are central in these histories and have active elements operating in the present

### **People with Lived Experiences with Being Marginalized and Excluded Need to Be at the Center of Change Efforts**

- Generally, the children, families, and early care providers, etc., who face the hardest circumstances live in worlds extremely different from the persons making key decisions. How can these very different worlds be brought together to create some shared

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon, L. (1994). *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890 – 1935*. New York, NY: The Free Press

understanding and urgency of correctly framed and prioritized issues?

- There has to be a change in the perspective-taking of persons in decision-making positions. This change needs to thoroughly include the language, views, perspectives, analyses, interpretations of meaning, and valuing of the people experiencing the hardships. What persons who have been excluded and/or harmed have to say about what they need, matters. Problems cannot be successfully solved without such joint input, co-work, and decision-making
- There are many ways to work on policy change to serve marginalized, neglected, and/or stigmatized populations
- Families do not live in siloes. They do not lead single-issue lives. Things that need to change for children and families are found in many different institutions and systems of society. There is “no one lever to pull” to produce needed change
- Non-siloed thinking is critical. Even to address one issue, many things need fixing at the same time
- People in many different communities already are actively working on various aspects of what might fall under the heading of “Whole Child/Whole Family;” they simply conceive and/or name it differently
- It is important that communities, parents, providers, etc. have the agency to be framers, narrators, and protagonists of their own stories and perspectives, AND that these stories/perspectives effectively reach decision-makers
- Historically, rough politics have often beat good policy
- Several critical questions: Who has a right to a childhood? To whom do funding-related decision-makers feel accountable? Who is accountable to the underserved populations, communities, families, children, providers, etc., and how are they or can they be adequately accountable?
- Knowledgeable community members should be included as collaborative thought partners and joint decision-makers

## **Community-Driven Systems Change Requires Time and Space for Relationship-Building, Planning, Creating, and Implementing**

- Presently, how, when, and where do we create space for people to think and collaborate in different ways, go beyond and outside of the usual, and fully participate in resolving the intersectional problems that impact their lives?
- There are critical needs for communities to have regular spaces, opportunities to come together and discuss/plan, and have their voices and issues raised. This is for collective planning and problem solving AND for the joy of community cohesion, gathering, celebrating and sharing community cultural ways, stories, knowledge, and ways of being in the world
- Give much more attention to policy and systems implementation. Implementation is largely hidden, but is a major place where inequities happen

### **Funders**

- Do more to even out the funder-to-grantee power dynamic and imbalance
- Streamline your requirements and administrative burdens on applicants
- Add some flexibility
- Eliminate redundancy of paperwork and complicated language
- Provide flexibility and larger amounts of time for grantees throughout the grant period based on the requirements of certain types of tasks (e.g., community participation)
- Engage with grantees: e.g., check in with us, help, listen, be accountable to us, learn from us, BUT do not be “Overseers” (in the historical meaning of this word)
- Consider giving further support to things in underserved communities that are already working; do not solely require us to compete (and continue to compete) for who is in the worst situation/position
- Allow budget items such as equitable pay for resident/community engagement, food for resident/community meetings/convenings, relevant cultural celebrations and honoring,

alternative and/or supplemental assessment of grantee activities (e.g., oral histories/narratives, video, panels, poster presentations, other art forms, etc.) that have potential to uplift issues and reach broader audiences

- Pay closer attention to contemporary threats to underserved communities/populations from various corners of the wider society. Be aware, appropriate, and protective of people/communities/populations that have been and continue to be in harm's way from parts of the wider society
- Identify and adopt ways to include smaller groups and non-profits as partners in the systemic work. Recognize how barriers to financial resources can exclude smaller organizations from fully participating in larger systemic work. For example, big organizations have deeper pockets and can provide services, such as for government contracts, in advance of receiving actual cash; smaller entities (more likely grassroots, people of color, lower-income, female run, etc.) are largely excluded from providing many such services because of no deep pockets, though very likely can do the job
- Many existing organizations/groups in underserved communities need general operating support
- Oral histories and oral traditions are legitimate sources of data
- Institutions, government, and funders need to be trustworthy in this policy and systems change work

### **Communities Are Already Working on a Wide Array of Issues and Systems Affecting Children Prenatal to 5, and Their Families**

*Some of those mentioned included:*

- Lower quality healthcare that substantially contributes to high rates of maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, especially Black maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, (Black birthing people are four times as likely to die as a result of pregnancy, pregnancy and delivery/postpartum complications than women of other races, and Black babies in LA County are two to three times more likely to die before their first birthday than babies of other races.)

- Restricted and poor-quality physical environments (e.g., oil wells; cement floors; no grass or trees; limited safe, equipped, open outdoor play areas; lead in the home and school drinking water, etc.). These and other hazards are dangerous for the health and well-being of many children and families (e.g., asthma rates, etc.)
- Economic pathways: e.g., a livable wage with full benefits; a degree of guaranteed income; cash with no strings attached; paid family leaves (childbirth, bereavement, etc.); paid time off for required trainings and for a substitute for early care providers, etc.

Again, thank you for your contribution. We appreciate your time and trust, and will use some of this rich material to guide our work in co-designing and implementing the First 5 LA Early Childhood Policy Advocacy Fund (EC PAF).

Please feel free to share this document with others.

Sincerely,

The Community Partners EC PAF Interview Team

Dr. Pauline E. Brooks (Consultant), Cynthia Freeman, Priscilla Romero, Patti Sanchez, and Dr. Lucretia Taylor



## First 5 Los Angeles Early Childhood Policy Advocacy Fund (EC PAF)

### Participants in Community Partners' Listening Sessions

July 2022 – February 2023

#### Community Partners interview team:

*Dr. Pauline Brooks (Consultant), Cynthia Freeman, Priscilla Romero, Patti Sanchez, Dr. Lucretia Taylor*

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#### We interviewed home childcare providers and parents:

1. **Home Childcare Providers, Black/African American (2)** – Black home childcare providers working in some of the most challenged parts of LA County as identified by the [Healthy Places Index](#). Providers had the choice to participate in groups of the same race/ethnicity or general.
2. **Home Childcare Providers, General (3)** – Black and Latina home childcare providers working in some of the most challenged parts of LA County as identified by the [Healthy Places Index](#). Providers had the choice to participate in groups of the same race/ethnicity or general.
3. **Home Childcare Providers, Latino\* (3)** – Latina home childcare providers working in some of the most challenged parts of LA County as identified by the [Healthy Places Index](#). Providers had the choice to participate in groups of the same race/ethnicity or general. This session was conducted in Spanish.  
  
*\*Our use of the term, “Latino” is inclusive of all who identify as Latina, Latinx, Latiné, Hispanic, and any other identifier for those of Latin American descent.*
4. **Parents (2)** – Immigrant mothers living in South Los Angeles shared their challenges with 0 to 5 systems as well as the experiences of being involved with Head Start and LAMP, describing how participation helped not only their child’s development, but their own. This session was conducted in Spanish.

#### We also interviewed one or more individuals from the following organizations:

5. **Black Californians United for Early Care and Education (BCUECE)** - Statewide coalition organized around 10-point policy plan intended to create bridges to previous work and create equity-minded policies focused on Black children, students, families, and ECE workforce in California.
6. **Black Women for Wellness** – Committed to the health and well-being of Black women and girls through health education, empowerment, and advocacy. Believes community has the solutions, resources, and responsibility to create the shifts and change needed to impact health status and to contribute to community’s survival and growth as a whole.
7. **Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo (CIELO)** – an Indigenous women-led organization working jointly with Indigenous communities residing in Los Angeles to fight for social justice through a

*cultural lens.*

8. [\*\*The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights \(CHIRLA\)\*\*](#) – *One of the largest advocates for immigrant rights, organizing, educating, and defending immigrants and refugees in the streets, courtrooms, and halls of power. A California leader with national impact seeking to achieve a world with freedom of mobility, full human rights, and true participatory democracy.*
9. [\*\*The Children’s Partnership\*\*](#) – *Works with local, state, and national partners to advance solutions that provide all of California’s 10 million children—regardless of their race, ethnicity, or place of birth—the resources and opportunities they need to grow up health and thrive.*
10. [\*\*Empowering Pacific Islander Communities \(EPIC\)\*\*](#) – *National organization based in Los Angeles that advances social justice by engaging Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders in culture-centered advocacy, leadership development, and research.*
11. [\*\*Inner City Struggle\*\*](#) – *An advocacy, civic engagement, and community-building organization dedicated to building stronger schools, growing civic engagement, and preventing housing displacement for a stronger and more powerful Eastside (includes communities of Boyle Heights, unincorporated East Los Angeles, El Sereno, and Lincoln Heights).*
12. [\*\*Parent Voices\*\*](#) – *A partnership of parents throughout CA that combines leadership development and community organizing in its efforts to increase funding, improve quality, and provide better access to child care for all families.*
13. [\*\*Promesa Boyle Heights\*\*](#) – *A collaborative of 20+ organizations and schools, led by backbone organization Proyecto Pastoral. Community families drive decision-making as part of a collective of residents, youth, schools, and community organizations united in lifting community voices and working together to transform conditions and improve opportunities for students and families.*
14. [\*\*Catalyst California \(previously Advancement Project\)\*\*](#) – *Advocates for racial justice by building power and transforming public systems through policymaking & systems change work in service of low-income communities of color in California.*
15. [\*\*Education Trust-West\*\*](#) – *Advocates for educational justice and high academic achievement of all California students, pre-K through college, particularly those of color & living in poverty. Focused on closing achievement and opportunity gaps from preschool through college through research, data, policy analysis, and advocacy.*
16. [\*\*Hope Street Margolis Family Center\*\*](#) – *A community health, education, and recreation resource of Dignity Health - California Hospital Medical Center (CHMC). Committed to improving the health and wellness of its community through direct services based on strengthening the health, development, and success of children and families as the cornerstone of creating healthier*

neighborhoods.

17. [South Central Los Angeles Ministry Project \(LAMP\)](#) – Provides tools and opportunities to help mothers achieve their family goals; to be active in their role as their child’s most important teacher and advocate; and to better navigate the community services and public institutions that can help their family.
18. [California Asset Building Coalition](#) - Statewide coalition which identifies and employs multiple and intersecting strategies to build economic security and power where they are most needed.
19. [Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles \(CCALA\)](#) - Countywide partnership of 10 partner agencies serving communities at the local level. Agencies provide services to 1000s of families and childcare providers across Los Angeles County.
20. [CA Child Care Resource & Referral Network](#) – State-funded, policy & advocacy system supporting parents, providers, and communities in CA through childcare provider trainings and support, family support in selecting childcare and referrals to other services, and maintaining a comprehensive database tracking provider licensing status, languages, and other attributes.
21. [Crystal Stairs](#) – helps to enhance the quality of life for thousands of children and families in Los Angeles every day. Helps families succeed, children learn, and childcare providers become competent, confident caregivers.
22. [Center for District Innovation and Leadership in Early Education \(DIAL EE\)](#) – Supports school districts to align early education and K-12 systems to ultimately realize the best outcomes for all children, from early childhood through high school graduation. Focus on leadership development, early education, and district advocacy in California.
23. [Department of Social Services](#) – A department of California Health and Human Services Agency, responsible for the oversight and administration of programs serving California’s most vulnerable residents.
24. [First 5 Center for Children’s Policy](#) – Develops research and policy thinking to improve early childhood systems in California. Studies and disseminates best practices and solutions in early childhood development; convenes experts inside and outside the early childhood space to inform policy; and evaluates solutions within and outside of CA that can be adapted for the state.
25. [First 5 LA, Best Start Communities](#) – First 5 LA and communities from 14 geographic areas with historic disenfranchisement and oppression, reimagine what is possible through a network of parents, communities, local and regional decision-makers, and public systems – working together at a local and regional level – to affect important policy, systems, and community

*change that improves outcomes for children and families.*

26. [First 5 LA, Commissioners](#) – *The First 5 LA Board of Commissioners is comprised of 13 members (nine voting, four ex-officio) in addition to nine Alternate Commissioners. The Board includes voting members appointed by each of the Los Angeles County Supervisors and the L.A. County departments of Children and Family Services, Public Health and Mental Health. The Chairman of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors also serves as Chairman of the First 5 LA Commission. The Board also includes representatives from other education, children, and family-oriented organizations throughout the country.*
27. [Los Angeles Unified School Board District 7 \(LAUSD BD7\)](#) – *represents students and families from South LA, Watts, Gardena, Carson, Lomita, Harbor City, Wilmington, and San Pedro. BD7 collaborates with constituents to solve problems and help ensure their schools thrive as centers of opportunity.*
28. [Ballmer Group](#) – *National and regional funder committed to improving economic mobility for children and families in the United States. It is deeply invested in southeast Michigan, Los Angeles County, and Washington state.*
29. [California Strategies](#) – *a full-service public affairs consulting firm dedicated to supporting navigation through California’s political, legislative, regulatory, and media environments.*
30. [Heising-Simons Foundation](#) – *A family foundation working to advance sustainable solutions in climate and clean energy, enable groundbreaking research in science, enhance the education of our youngest learners, and support human rights for all. Its education grantmaking goal is to facilitate the creation and strengthening of early childhood systems necessary for children from low-income families and children of color to reach their full potential by the year 2044, the year when the US becomes majority-minority.*