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Candidates for California Governor Discussed Vision for Young Children and Families with Voters.

California Governor candidates Betty Yee and Superintendent Tony Thurmond sat down with Choose Children 2026 for a public forum on early childhood investment.

EAST PALO ALTO, CA — Today, the Choose Children 2026 campaign and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) hosted one-on-one conversations with California gubernatorial candidates State Controller Betty Yee and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond. The forum provided a deep dive into the candidates' specific strategies for addressing the significant gap in California's investment in early childhood.

"It's a no-brainer to me that we have to invest in those supports," said Betty Yee. "As California's next Governor, I would prioritize this issue and look at every policy through the lens of the health and well-being of our children, because this is the investment that makes everything else possible."

These conversations, moderated by Avo Makedessian, Executive Director of the First 5 Association of California, allowed for an in-depth examination of how each candidate would close the gap families face in accessing affordable, high-quality early childhood services. As Choose Children 2026's previous polling found, 83% of likely June voters want the next Governor to prioritize children and families.

"We need to have a blueprint for how we move forward; that plan needs to give every California family a chance," said Tony Thurmond. "The way to help children is twofold: first, you make it affordable for families to live in this state, and second, you create policies that help them. As Governor, I intend to enact universal childcare in California."

This event marks the first in a statewide series of forums with gubernatorial candidates hosted by Choose Children 2026, a coalition of advocates and foundations dedicated to making early childhood a top priority in the 2026 Gubernatorial race. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation serves as a regional catalyst for change, partnering with donors and organizations to build a more equitable community where every resident has the opportunity to thrive.