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Media Contact:

Haley Townes

(909) 697-5799

haley.townes@slstrategy.com

An Open Letter to Xavier Becerra and Steve Hilton

California Child Advocates Plea for Gubernatorial Candidates to Make Early Childhood a Day-One Priority

As Californians across the state prepare to choose our next governor, we have the chance to shape the future for the changemakers, leaders, and innovators growing up in our state today.

California's children cannot vote, but they are the state's greatest investment. As you prepare for your forums, townhalls, events and tours to tell voters what kind of state you want to lead, Choose Children is asking you to tell California's families specifically and publicly what you will do for our youngest residents on day one.

Choose Children 2026 is a statewide campaign of child advocates committed to making early childhood investment a top priority of California's next governor. We know the stakes and what works. Since 2018, we have worked across every level of government to win real results for California's young families, including bringing billions to California's early childhood system via the expansion of universal transitional kindergarten and child care slots, funding home visiting and developmental/trauma screenings, strengthening and expanding Medi-Cal coverage to more income-eligible young children and families.

That's why our campaign of families, early educators, community-based organizations, First 5s, advocates, and philanthropic leaders are urging you to commit to the following:

1. **Child care:** Investing in and expanding options for reliable, affordable child care accessibility for parents and caregivers, and setting thriving wages for the educators and providers who make that care possible.
2. **Governance:** Aligning early childhood systems so families can navigate support easily, instead of fighting through a maze of paperwork and disconnected programs, through improved governance frameworks, systems, and administration with a clear infrastructure of state-to-local implementation and a feedback loop from communities back to the state on what is working, what needs improvement, and new opportunities to better serve children and families.
3. **Birth equity:** Expanding access to high-quality, culturally concordant health care, well-child visits, and developmental screenings from pregnancy through age five, and closing the disparities that put Black and Brown mothers and babies most at risk.

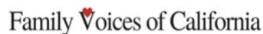
These priorities ensure that California supports all children and recognizes that a child's health, learning, and family stability are inseparable.



These practical, achievable reforms are the kind of critical, common-sense leadership that California needs. These policies are not just investments in our kids; they're investments in California's workforce, economy, and communities.

As candidates, your choice is simple: choose children today, choose California's tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Choose Children 2026



For more information, visit choosechildren.org.