



California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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**EDUCATORS SAY “NO” TO
CHILD CARE CUTS & REALIGNMENT:**

153,000 children could lose care in 2003

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Federation of Teachers (CFT), AFT, AFL-CIO, announced today that it strongly opposes the governor’s proposed realignment of child care and development programs. “The realignment proposal creates more problems than it solves,” said CFT President Mary Bergan. “To ensure California’s children are ready to succeed in school, preschool care must have an early learning component. The proposal would take child development responsibility away from educators, increase bureaucracy, threaten federal funding, and create new obstacles to parents trying to get quality care for their children.”

The realignment proposal would take responsibility and funding for all child care and development programs away from the California Department of Education and give it to the state’s 58 counties. Approximately \$1 billion of the \$8 billion realignment proposal relates to child care. The educators sounded the alarm today about the harm such a move could cause to families with young children. “When you change programs like this, kids get lost in the shuffle,” said Bergan. “And the ones who do make the transition will find themselves with fewer adults for the same number of kids, no requirements for teachers, and hit or miss early learning programs.”

“Research shows the critical role early care and education plays in school success,” said San Francisco preschool teacher Elaine Merriweather, Chair of the California Federation of Teachers Early Childhood Committee. “The proposal especially threatens the poorest children, those who improve school performance most when enrolled in early care and development. Up to 153,000 children could lose care on July 1, 2003.”

“The realignment proposal undercuts the governor’s goal of reducing bureaucracy and administrative costs. Current state administrative costs are less than 1%,” said Bergan. “Counties have no infrastructure to support this program. There is no way 58 counties can each create a child care bureaucracy without multiplying administrative costs.”

The realignment proposal also threatens \$10 million in annual federal matching funds. “The federal government requires detailed information on families and local matching funds,” said Bergan. “Failure

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of counties to meet these obligations would jeopardize federal funds.”

Counties would not be required to spend new funds on early care and development after the first budget year. Pressure on county budgets for health care or other programs could mean that early care and development funds would be shifted to meet other needs.

The governor’s proposal also conflicts with the new Master Plan for Education. “The new Master Plan recognizes that infant, toddler and preschool programs must feed into the schools to be successful,” said Merriweather. “The realignment proposal takes responsibility away from educators and puts it in the hands of county bureaucrats that have no experience with education programs. That’s a bad idea.”

The educators noted that harm caused by the governor’s realignment proposal could be compounded by President Bush’s proposed new restrictions on the federal Head Start program. The president has proposed to reduce Head Start services to literacy only. “The combined impact of the state and federal proposals could mean that thousands of children will be less ready to learn in school, and that families will lose access to services that help parents prepare their children for school success,” said Bergan.

The California Federation of Teachers represents over one hundred thousand educators and classified employees at all levels of California public and private education.

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