

California child care providers push governor for higher pay ^[1]

Author: Ronayne, Kathleen

Source: SF Gate

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Jun 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of child care providers in California marched and chanted Thursday outside the state Capitol demanding higher wages, a topic that appears to be the final sticking point in budget negotiations between lawmakers and Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom.

"We are essential workers and it's about time that we're treated like it," Miren Algorri, a child care provider in San Diego, declared to the crowd. She said Newsom is treating such workers like they are "disposable."

Millions of California children are eligible for state-subsidized child care programs, but the workers who take care of them say they are often paid less than minimum wage after expenses.

The state sets provider rates through the budget, and the workers haven't seen an increase in their pay in four years. This year, providers are also negotiating their first contract after Newsom signed legislation in 2019 allowing them to unionize.

How much to raise the rates is the last unresolved budget issue between Newsom and lawmakers, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon said. They have only a few days left to reach an agreement, because the budget must be signed by Newsom by June 30. Rendon, a Democrat who worked in the child care industry before entering politics, said raising provider rates is the chamber's "No. 1 priority."

Newsom has proposed creating 100,000 new subsidized child care slots, while lawmakers want to create 200,000 new slots. They've proposed \$1.1 billion more in spending than Newsom for "child care rate reform." Most child care workers are women, and many are women of color.

Child Care Providers United, the new union, organized the rally at the Capitol grounds, which featured hundreds of workers in yellow shirts that said "raise the rates" as they chanted "no contract, no peace." They were also joined by state Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins and two national union presidents — Lee Saunders of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and Mary Kay Henry of the Service Employees International Union.

It's not unusual for unions to publicly rally for higher wages. But this year's dispute comes as Newsom tries to keep Democrats united behind him in the face of an expected recall election. Since his first months in office, Newsom has said he's committed to advancing equity for children and their caregivers. But where his administration comes down on pay could prompt some providers to rethink their political support.

"I've always supported him, however now I'm reconsidering," said Justine Flores, a provider from Los Angeles and member of the bargaining committee.

"If he doesn't sit here and actually bargain with us, actually sit there and raise our rates and actually treat us like the essential workers he said we are, then what's the point in supporting him?" she said.

Ella Taylor of Sacramento, a child care provider for 20 years, now alongside her daughter, says she will support Newsom but hopes he'll step up and raise wages.

Pay rates for child care providers vary based on a number of factors. Union leaders say Newsom's administration is offering them lower raises than what they're seeking and has been difficult to get to the bargaining table.

The governor's office directed questions to the California Department of Human Resources.

"The Administration is working hard on a collective bargaining agreement that offers fair reimbursement rates to child care providers," Amy Palmer, acting spokesperson for the department, said in a statement.

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: wages ^[4]

working conditions ^[5]

child care workforce [6]

gender [7]

Source URL (modified on 29 Jun 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/06/california-child-care-providers-push-governor-higher-pay>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/06/california-child-care-providers-push-governor-higher-pay> [2]

<https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/California-child-care-providers-push-governor-for-16272660.php> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/wages> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/working-conditions> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care-workforce> [7]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender>