



## Creating Safe Spaces in Early Childhood Development Centers SB 959 (Hurtado)

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The first five years of life are critical for a child's intellectual, emotional and social development. SB 959 (Hurtado) would ensure that early childhood programs have "safe space" policies in order to protect the safety, privacy, and well-being of young children and their families.

### Problem: Hostile immigration policies are creating fear and trauma in immigrant families

The spread of anti-immigrant policies including heightened immigration enforcement activities, changes to public charge policy, and promises of massive raids, have unmistakably changed the climate in which immigrant families are living across California. **These policy shifts have made immigrant families increasingly wary of utilizing essential public services and programs, including early childhood education.** Families are worried about sharing their personal information, how participating in publicly funded programs could affect their ability to obtain long-term status, and the possibility of encountering immigration agents at or near their child care provider.

**California's early childhood development (ECD) programs – like family child care homes, preschools, and child care and preschool centers – serve over half a million children each year** and play an important role in the development and wellbeing of children, including supporting the language, literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional competencies needed for a smooth transition into kindergarten and later life success. These programs also connect families to resources like nutrition, health, and parenting services. **For families facing adversity, early childhood programs can provide stability when everything else is uncertain.**

**The impact of hostile immigration policies on young children and their families, and early education programs is especially alarming in California, where nearly half of California's three million children under five years old are children of immigrants, and three in every five pre-school age children of immigrants attend a preschool center.**

### Solution: Extend "safe space" policies to early childhood programs

SB 959 (Hurtado) would require the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide all ECD programs with information about a child's right to be safely enrolled in an early education program regardless of their immigration status, in the parent's primary language. **The information provided will include "Know Your Rights" information**

**and model “safe space” policies developed by the Attorney General.** CDE will also help ECD programs to provide this information to the children and families they serve in their primary language. This bill expands upon AB 699 (O’Donnell), enacted in 2018, which was also a response to hostile federal climate, and provides protections for students and families enrolled in K-12 schools.

**This bill aims to reduce childhood trauma related to immigration so young children can learn and grow without the added stressors.** California has the opportunity to focus its efforts on ensuring children in immigrant families are able to achieve their full potential by ensuring access to early childhood development experiences free from fear and providing other supports that promote the safety, privacy, and healthy development of these children.

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