

March 27, 2022

Dr. Mary Sandy and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to share a critical concern regarding Agenda Item 3H. I am professor emerita of early childhood education at American River College in Sacramento, CA, and I support the concept of an early childhood teaching credential. I applaud you, Dr. Sandy, and your staff for recognizing early care and education as a universal public good and creating a credential focused on early childhood. However, as proposed, it risks more harm than good.

The proposed credential treats early childhood as if it begins at age 3, excluding equally-well-prepared teachers serving children under 3. It is noteworthy that the existing early childhood teaching credential authorizes service in “grades 3 and below.” Why, in this proposal, are you suggesting it be changed to age 3 through 3rd grade?

I call your attention to these facts:

- Early childhood is defined as birth to 8.
- Learning begins at birth and happens within everyday moments of care.
- California’s existing mixed delivery early care and education system – inclusive of public schools, non-profits, center-based programs, and family child care programs – is poised to expand PreK education. To fully serve children prior to kindergarten, we need this system.
- Our early childhood teacher preparation programs prepare candidates to work in this system, and they prepare them to work with children birth to 8, not 3 to 8. A credential focused on 3 to 8 will irreparably fracture this higher education system.
- It is a sad fact that in our society, the younger the learner, the lower the teacher pay. And equally sad is the racial divide – with [39% of the TK-12 workforce teachers of color as compared to 70% of center-based ECE teachers](#).

As proposed, this credential simply shifts the wage gap and exacerbates racial inequity – higher certification and pay for those who teach children 3 and up, and lower certification and pay for those who work with children under 3. This is not right.

UC Berkeley’s [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#) recommends that the Commission on Teacher Credentialing revive the existing [early childhood credential](#) and that it be revised to “reflect the birth-to-age-eight continuum of learning and development.”

The Commission plays an influential role in safeguarding every child’s right to learn. As you consider an early childhood credential, I urge you to align it with the science of how young children learn and authorize this credential to include the full span of early childhood, birth to 8.

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Maguire-Fong