

**GOVERNOR SIGNS SIMITIAN CHILD CARE
LEGISLATION: AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE FOR SAN
MATEO COUNTY GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE**

SACRAMENTO – Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation Thursday extending the life of the San Mateo County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project. Senate Bill 1304, authored by State Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), which extends the life of San Mateo County’s “first in the state” affordable child care program.

Because the cost of living in San Mateo County is high, many of the state’s rules and regulations have historically not allowed San Mateo County residents to qualify for affordable child care. As a result, fewer children were served and unspent funds had to be returned to the state.

In response to the problem, San Mateo County child care providers worked with Simitian in 2003 to develop legislation creating the pilot project now in place. Local child care advocates were worried, however, that the program would be phased out next year.

Signature of Simitian’s latest legislation ensures that an additional 200 children from low income families will continue to receive affordable child care, while other children from around the county will receive extra hours of care in the coming years. The measure also ensures that funds meant for San Mateo County can and will be used in San Mateo County rather than sent back to the state.

The San Mateo County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project was first introduced in 2003 as AB 1326 by then Assemblymember Simitian,

and signed into law that same year. It authorized the County of San Mateo to develop and implement an individualized county child care subsidy plan to ensure that child care subsidies received by the county are used to address local needs, conditions, and priorities.

A first of its kind, this program has given the county more flexibility in providing subsidized child care. “The problem with state-subsidized child care is that one size doesn’t fit all, especially when it comes to high cost areas like ours,” said Simitian.

Under current state rules families ordinarily “income-out” of eligibility for child care subsidies when they earn 75% of State Median Income. Prior to San Mateo’s Child Care Subsidy Program, San Mateo County families were losing child care assistance when they were still earning barely enough to pay their housing costs, much less cover child care costs. That’s because 75% of State Median Income is approximately 43% of County Median Income. The state rule kept parents from applying for better paying jobs, accepting promotions and pay raises, improving the standard of living for their families, and achieving self-sufficiency.

“Too many of our families couldn’t qualify.” says Simitian, “We were sending money we needed but couldn’t use back to the State, and we were losing more and more child care slots with every passing day. The San Mateo County Child Care Subsidy Pilot Project was the necessary response.”

Simitian’s 2003 legislation authorized the Local Planning Council of San Mateo County to create a San Mateo County child care subsidy plan that would permit waivers of state-specific rules regarding income eligibility, reimbursement rates, and parent fees for a five-year pilot project. San Mateo County was the first County in the State allowed to develop its own program and criteria.

"For the last three years the subsidy pilot has helped support families and the fragile child care infrastructure they depend on at no additional cost to the family" said George Archambeau, Interim Executive Director of the Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County. "Under the pilot we were able to pay for additional hours of child care for families already in the program, and served 200 more children annually."

The 2003 law, however, would have required the County to phase out the plan between January 1, 2009, and January 1, 2011; so Simitian introduced SB 1304 to extend those provisions for an additional five years. San Mateo County will now be able to develop and implement the plan until January 1, 2014, and to phase out the plan between January 1, 2014, and January 1, 2016.

San Mateo County Supervisor Mark Church said that, "The Governor's signature on Senator Simitian's bill is good news indeed. Vital child care spaces will not be lost, and families in need of child care will not be turned away."

SB 1304 does not require additional funding from the State. Instead, the County will continue to receive the same level of funding, but will have the flexibility to use those funds more effectively.

To learn more about SB 1304, please visit www.senatorsimitian.com