



Sonoma County Child Care & Children's Health Initiative

WHY a local funding stream for early childhood?

Recurring disasters and pandemic starting 2017 exacerbated pre-existing issues:

- Severe shortage of child care, especially for infants/toddlers
- ECE workforce severely depleted due to combination of low wages, high cost of living
 - increased rates of child abuse, DV, parental mental health & SUD, maternal depression, early childhood social emotional & behavioral issues
 - Only 20% of entering kindergarten students were ready to succeed in 2022, 6-year downward trend
 - Declining public funding streams specifically dedicated to children, birth to five



Developing a Local Coalition

- Viable ballot measure effort coalesced between 2015-2020: polling, building capacity, exploration, relationship-building and strategic leveraging of opportunities
- First 5 Sonoma became an independent public agency in 2019 and developed a policy recommendation for local, dedicated revenue stream for children, 0-5
- CA Supreme Court upheld Upland case in 2020: 50+1 threshold for voter-led initiatives
- Established OKOF 501c4 in 2021 as an organizational “backbone” to advance *policy solutions* that prioritize the needs of children and families
- OKOF PAC is a cross-sector group of leaders (public-private-nonprofit)



Sonoma County Child Care & Children's Health Initiative

- Targeting the November 2024 ballot
- 1/4 cent sales tax will raise approximately \$30 million annually, no “sunset”
- Loosely modeled after 2018 Alameda County measure
- Ballot language refined by James Harrison using First 5 Commission’s policy recommendations
- 60% of revenue will expand access to high quality child care & early learning
- 40% of revenue will promote the health and wellness of children, birth to five years old, especially those impacted by homelessness and other trauma



Administration & Oversight

- First 5 Sonoma County Commission called out in ballot language as administrator: “an independent public entity that has administered state tobacco tax revenue funding locally to support early childhood since 1998”
- Integrate into existing First 5 strategic planning and grantmaking infrastructure
- 11-member Advisory Council to be appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, composed of parents, experts in children's health and development and early learning providers
- Annual external audit



Expenditure Plan for Tax Revenue

Expand Sonoma County's Child Care & Early Educator Workforce

- Bolster wages for the lowest paid providers
- Create incentives and supports for workforce development and retention, such as paid internships



Expenditure Plan for Tax Revenue

Develop Child Care Facilities Where Parents Live & Work

- Ensure existing facilities are maintained and are safe, healthy and high-quality learning environments
- Integrate child care and early learning facilities into new housing construction
- Create incentives for employers to support co-location of child care facilities on or near worksites



Expenditure Plan for Tax Revenue

Expand Early Childhood & Perinatal Mental Health Support

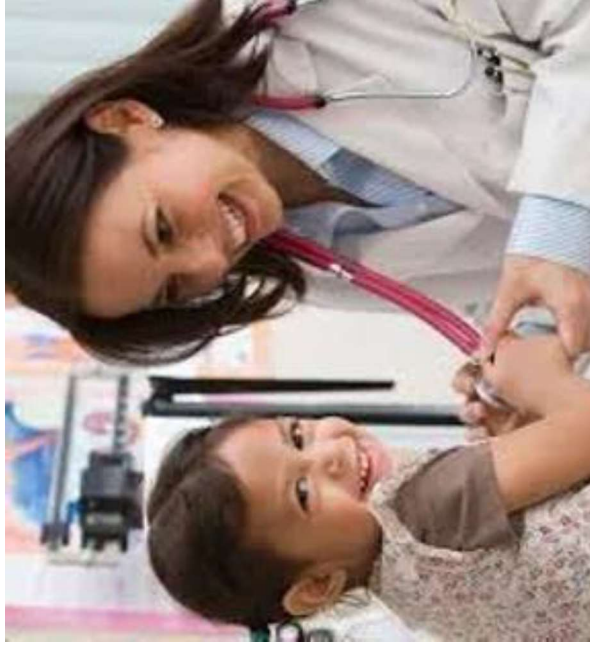
- Supports for mental health & emotional well-being during pregnancy and postpartum to promote optimal *child* outcomes.
- Expand services like home visiting that promote secure attachment and optimal early relational health



Expenditure Plan for Tax Revenue

Strengthen Systems for Pediatric Screening, Referral & Treatment

- Ensure regular well-child visits and screenings, including dental and social-emotional development
- Strengthen systems of and tech for screening, referral and navigation that are critical to intervening early



Expenditure Plan for Tax Revenue

Prioritize Children Impacted by Homelessness & Other Traumas

- Trauma undermines healthy early development, school readiness and academic success, has negative long-term outcomes if unaddressed
- Screening and early intervention for this priority population to ID and mitigate impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences



2022 Polling: Test Draft Ballot Measure Language

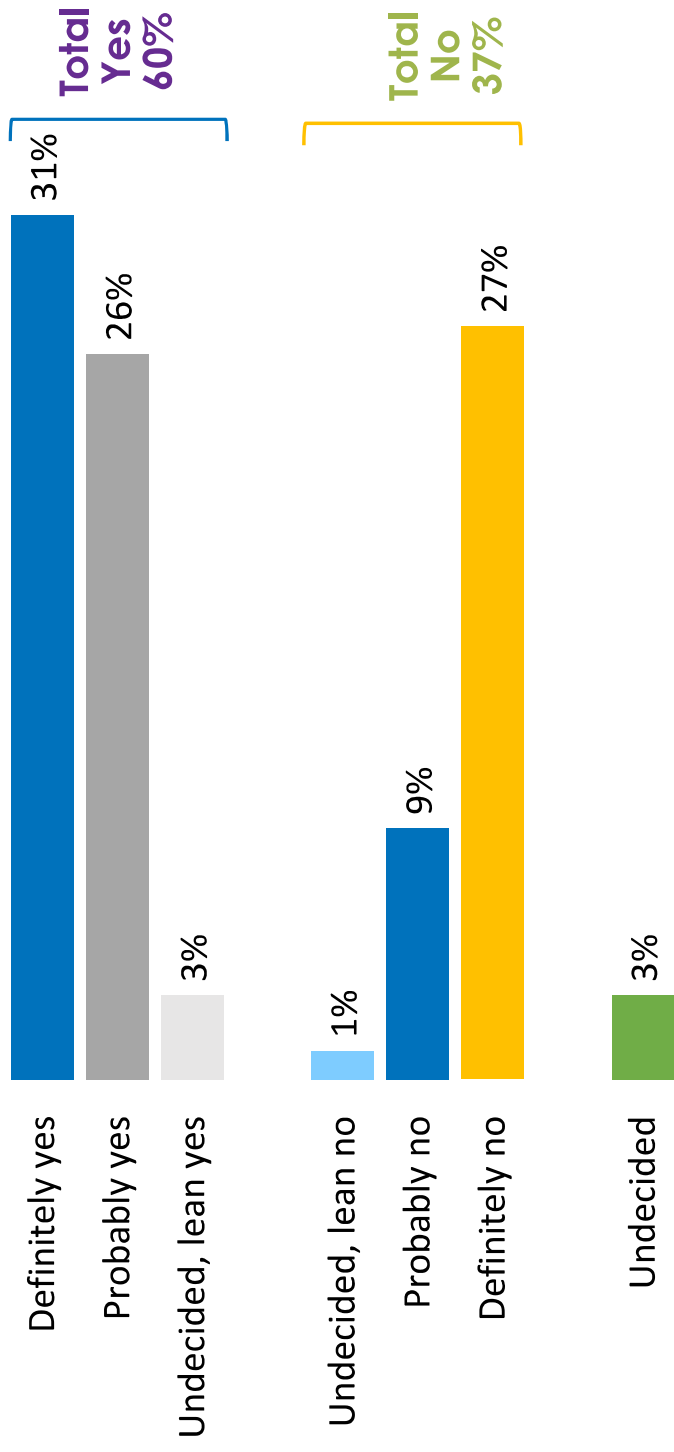
“To improve the health and well-being of Sonoma County children by:

- Increasing access to quality child care and early childhood education to start kindergarten ready to learn;
- Preventing child abuse and neglect; and
- Increasing access to vital health services for children, such as preventive health care, dental screening, mental health services;

Shall Sonoma County establish a ¼-cent tax, providing \$22,000,000 annually, until ended by voters, subject to independent audits and review by an oversight commission?”



Three in five voters said they would vote “yes” on the proposed sales tax.



Q3. If the election were held today, would you vote yes in favor of the measure, or no to oppose it?

Conclusions from Polling

- A majority of Sonoma County voters support the proposed sales tax measure with Democrats, younger voters, and Latinos all strongly supportive.
- Voters place the greatest priority on supporting children experiencing homelessness, providing a living wage to ECE workers and supporting children's mental health.
- Messages describing the benefits to brain development and paying ECE workers fairly resonate strongly, but overall support does not shift with positive messaging.
- Criticisms focused on taxes and government distrust are the most convincing arguments against the measure, but do not shift support greatly.
- Measure appears likely to be successful with a 50+1 simple majority vote required for a voter-initiated sales tax ballot measure.



Our Kids Our Future: Path to Victory

RAISE FUNDS

550k for both qualification and campaign phases

QUALIFY

Submit 21k VALID voter signatures December 2023

CAMPAIGN

Long runway to build support, GOTV, with intensive comms strategy Sept-Nov 2024



2023 Focus: Qualification



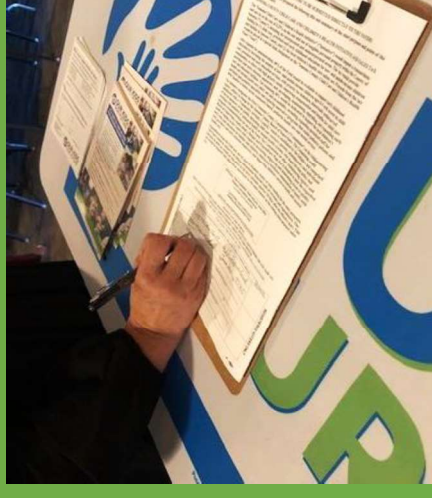
Previous Effort: Targeted November '22 Ballot

- Pandemic issues hampered paid and volunteer signature gathering, fundraising
- Overall capacity issues especially nonprofit sector
- Measure *failed to qualify* due to fraudulent signatures turned in by subcontracted workers of paid firm Total Signers



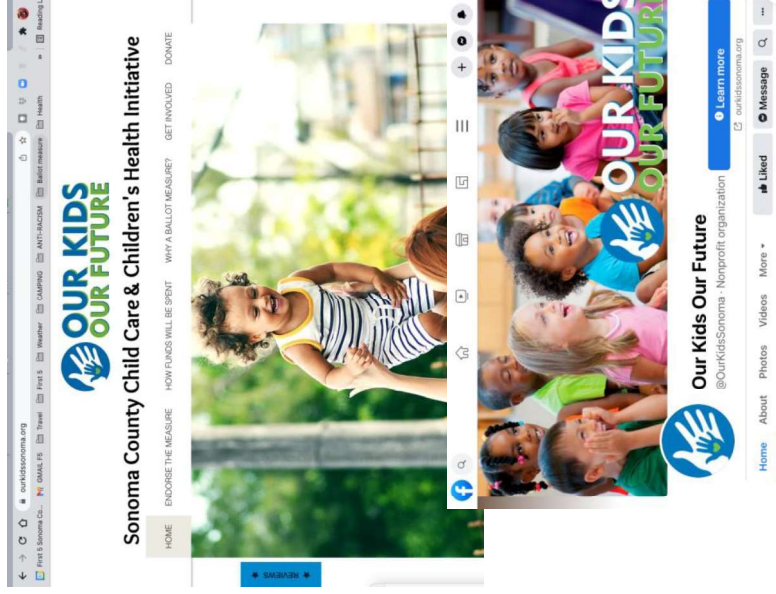
Current Effort: Targeting November '24 Ballot

- Build on 2022 momentum: endorsements, donations, commitment
- Started early and hired most qualified signature firm
- Cultivate volunteers for campaign phase
- On track to qualify in January 2024



Key Campaign Assets

- Kitchen cabinet: committed & influential cross-sector leaders, strong fundraising capacity
- Consultant team: political strategy, organizing, understanding local landscape, top-notch signature gathering firm
- Ongoing support of major foundation
- Endorsements: Broad, bi-partisan
- Community Foundation Advocacy Fund: will fund c3s to support campaign phase
- Clarity and urgency of issue



2024 Planned Strategies



- Fund nonprofits through Community Foundation to support canvassing & tabling, text & phone banking
- Communications: social media, mail piece, yard signs, large signage, increase visibility of First 5 Sonoma
- Continue to proactively neutralize any opposition



Questions?

