



YES *on* I

Frequently Asked Questions:

The Sonoma County Child Care and Children's Health Initiative

Why is the Sonoma County Child Care and Children's Health Initiative (commonly called the "Children's Initiative"), Measure I, on the ballot?

Sonoma County is experiencing a crisis of early childhood care, health, and education. Nearly 50% of all available child care slots in Sonoma County were lost due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Today, less than 20% of children entering kindergarten are fully prepared to be successful in school**—the latest indicator in a six-year downward trend in the kindergarten readiness of Sonoma County's children. Given that 90% of brain development occurs before the age of 5, this will have dire long term consequences, not only for this cohort of kids, but on our entire community. Measure I provides immediate investment to turnaround early childhood education and children's health in Sonoma County.

What is the proposed measure?

The Sonoma County Child Care and Children's Health Initiative will establish a local revenue stream **dedicated to supporting our youngest and most vulnerable residents**—children ages 0-5 years old. By approving a ¼-cent countywide sales tax on the November 2024 ballot, Sonoma County voters will direct \$30 million annually to expand access to quality child care and promote children's health and well being, especially supporting kids impacted by homelessness and other traumas.

How did the Children's Initiative, Measure I, qualify for the ballot?

To address the local child care emergency, we created Our Kids Our Future, a local non-profit, to advocate for the needs of children and families in Sonoma County. After looking at a number of possible solutions, **Our Kids Our Future launched a voter petition drive to qualify the Children's Initiative for the ballot, eventually gaining over 20,000 signatures from registered voters.** Our Kids Our Future's grassroots, voter-led initiative was the first countywide ballot measure to qualify for the November 2024 ballot.

How will the proceeds from the Children's Initiative, Measure I, be spent?

Every dollar raised by Measure I will be spent on child care, early education, and children's health. Of the total funds collected, 60% of annual revenue will be allocated to child care and early childhood education expansion and operation, and 40% of proceeds will go

toward expanding access to children's health issues such as healthy brain development, mental health programs for children, and to support families with children ages 0-5 that are experiencing homelessness.

How will the Children's Initiative, Measure I Impact our local economy?

The research is clear: investing in early childhood education and children's health strengthens local economies. Numerous studies show that the return on investment (ROI) for early interventions for at-risk youth ages 0-5 is greater than 1:8 benefit, i.e. for every \$1 spent, \$8 is saved in downstream impacts such as diversionary, mental health and incarceration programs. Further, investments in early childhood health and education provide exponential returns to the community, improving educational outcomes, reducing future social service costs, and fostering healthier, more resilient families.

How can we be certain the funds generated from Measure I will be spent on kids?

Transparency and accountability are built into the measure. The funds generated from Measure I are legally separate from all other county funds, and dedicated only to the purpose of the measure. First 5 Sonoma County, an independent public agency that is separate from the County of Sonoma, will administer the funds. First 5 has the unique ability to utilize existing administrative resources to streamline applications and oversight - making sure these funds go as far as possible. On an annual basis, an independent financial audit of the revenues and expenditures of the Fund will be released to the public.

How will Measure I raise wages for childcare workers?

In order to expand childcare and bolster provider wages, **Measure I will provide direct subsidy payments to Sonoma County childcare facilities and home-providers.** To determine the procedures and administration of these distributions, an eleven-member Community Advisory Council, appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, will propose annual Child Care and Children's Health Program Plans, Budget, and Expenditure Plans.

Who will be on the Community Advisory Council? Can I be on it?

The Council will be composed of eleven members, who will serve four-year terms. **In order to ensure a diversity of perspective, Measure I requires members come from several areas of expertise** including pediatric care, children's mental healthcare, early childhood education, home childcare, state or federal subsidized child care program administrators, and parents and guardians of children under the age of six.

If you qualify for one of these positions and have interest in joining the Council, we encourage you to apply! As required by state law, the opening will be posted on the County Board of Supervisors's website, where you will be able to apply after the election.

