

TOWN OF FAIRFAX

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March 7, 2023

The Honorable Congressman Jared Huffman
United States House of Representatives
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Letter of Support for the County of Marin's \$2,500,000 Congressionally Directed Spending Request for the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, a low-income-serving childcare center

Dear Congressman Huffman,

On behalf of the Town of Fairfax California, I would like to express our support for the County of Marin's project request of \$2.5 million for much-needed capital improvements for the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, which provides subsidized childcare to more than 110 low-income children in Marin.

On February 7, 2024, the Fairfax Town Council pledged a donation of \$25,000 to the Fairfax-Anselmo Children's Center (FSACC) solely for the purpose of purchasing the property at 199 Porteous Avenue, Fairfax, from the Ross Valley School District so they may continue to operate the FSACC at the location, and the Council adopted a Resolution making findings appropriate to the agenda item.

We know how expensive the cost of living in the Bay Area is, especially in Marin County. This is why safety-net, public assistance programs are essential to ensure that those in Marin's service economy, education, nonprofits, and other low-wage jobs are able to live in the communities they serve.

State-subsidized childcare slots for low-income families are a critical safety net. Marin County has the second highest cost of childcare in the state; \$2,600/month for infant care and \$2,315 for preschool. A state-subsidized childcare slot therefore provides essential support for parents who may otherwise not be able to afford childcare; enabling them to continue employment, education, or pursue other opportunities while ensuring their children receive high-quality care and early childhood education. To qualify for a subsidized childcare slot, a family of four must earn less than \$96,300, which is **47% lower** than the Marin countywide household median income of \$142,019.

The Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center (FSACC) is the oldest standing state-subsidized childcare center in Marin County (operating since 1973), providing 110 children from 90 low-

income families with year-round childcare. More than 3 in 4 of the children served by the Children's Center are children of color, compared with just 20% of residents countywide.

Children served by the FSACC come from the Ross Valley and other parts of central Marin, including the working-class Canal neighborhood in San Rafael. More than 90% of Canal residents are Hispanic – compared with 66% of all Marin residents who identify as White. The average household income in the Canal is roughly a third of the rest of the County.

Last year, the future of the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center was in peril. The Center, which does not own its property, but leases it from the Ross Valley School District – faced possible closure when the school district moved to terminate the Center's lease. The property needs major renovations to address deferred maintenance, ensure future seismic and fire safety for long-term sustainability. Without an identified funding source for needed facility renovations, the School District voted to evict the Center from the property.

The community rallied around the Center, and to prevent closure and the loss of its 110 subsidized childcare slots, a deal is being negotiated to have the school district sell the property to an intermediary nonprofit, which will then lease it to the FSACC, to ensure its continued operation as a subsidized childcare center.

The project has broad local support, and the County of Marin, Marin Community Foundation, and the Town of Fairfax have contributed significant funding towards the purchase of the property and immediate repairs needed (Phase 1). However, funding is needed for Phase 2 renovations which include seismic retrofitting, HVAC, abatement, and other upgrades which will ensure the Center can continue to serve thousands of children in Marin for years to come. **Marin cannot afford to lose the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center**, and the 110 subsidized slots it provides (12% of the 950 total slots in Marin). Especially when more than 900 eligible, low-income children in Marin remain on the waiting list for a subsidized slot.

We support this project and the \$2.5 million in federal funds requested that would fill the Center's critical funding gap for the second phase of needed renovations. I urge your full and fair consideration of the importance of this funding request. Please contact Town Manager Heather Abrams at habrams@townoffairfax.org if you need more information.

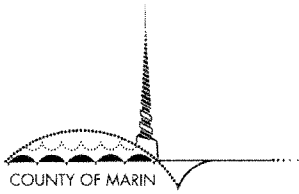
Sincerely,



Barbara Coler
Mayor of Fairfax

Enclosure

cc: Supervisor Katie Rice, Marin County Board of Supervisors
Fairfax Town Council



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Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center

\$2.5M CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING REQUEST FOR CENTER WHICH SERVES 110 LOW-INCOME CHILDCARE SLOTS

Serving Marin's low-income families for more than 50 years

Since 1973, the Fairfax San Anselmo Children's Center has been one of few subsidized childcare centers in Marin, currently serving 110, or 12% of the County's total subsidized childcare slots.

To qualify for a subsidized childcare slot, a **family of 4 must earn less than \$96,300**; 47% lower than the countywide median of \$142,019. **More than 75% of those served by the Center are children of color.** Subsidized slots critically enable lower-income families to afford to stay in Marin and in the workforce, whereas otherwise, childcare for them would be unaffordable.

Community effort to save Center

Last year, the future of the Center was in peril. The Center leases the property from the Ross Valley School District (RVSD). Without funding for needed repairs, RVSD issued a termination to the lease and in early 2024 voted to evict the Center. Marin **cannot afford to lose the Center** and its 110 subsidized childcare slots, when more than **800 eligible, low-income children are currently on the countywide waitlist.**

After a long period of exploring alternative sites and options, a group of community members convened to develop a creative funding and sale proposal. To prevent closure, the RVSD and the Center agreed to a path forward which includes selling the property to an intermediary nonprofit, which will then lease the facility to the Center to allow it to continue its operations. The County, Marin Community Foundation, Town of Fairfax and other benefactors raised more than \$2M for the property purchase.

Facility renovations needed

There is a commitment that, after the property transfer, the facility and campus renovations will commence. The childcare facility needs major renovations to address deferred maintenance and ensure future seismic and fire safety for long-term sustainability.



The 50-year old facility needs major renovations.

From October 2023 to January 2024 the Center had more than 15 site visits by architects, engineers and construction experts to design a renovations plan to modernize the facility. This plan allows continuous childcare operations without relocating or use of temporary buildings; renovations will prioritize safety and accessibility work in two phases:

Phase 1 (2024-25): redesign of the parking lot, fire access, ADA upgrades, bathrooms and lower wing (\$3M)

Phase 2 (2025-26): Upper wing and multi-purpose room, including roof, bathrooms, HVAC, abatement, electrical and lighting (\$3-5M)

\$2.5M Federal funds requested

The project has **broad local support**, and to date, funding contributed to it has all been local dollars from the County, cities, Community Foundation, and private donations. However, there is a significant funding gap for the needed renovations. **\$2.5M of federal funding** is respectfully requested to support Phase 2:

\$2,0M	Acquisition (<i>underway</i>)	Local
\$3,0	Phase 1 renovations	Local
\$1,0	Phase 2 renovations	Local
\$2,5	Phase 2 renovations	Federal
\$8,5M	TOTAL	

Marin Independent Journal

Published February 24, 2024

Offer could save children's center

Nonprofit's purchase-lease plan would avoid operations' extinction

By Heidi Tomsy

FAIRFAX-SAN ANSELMO CHILDREN'S CENTER

When the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center (FASC) was notified that the Ross Valley School District (RVSD) was terminating its lease, the future of the center was in peril. The center, which has served the community since 1973, provides 110 subsidized childcare slots for low-income families. Without funding for needed repairs, RVSD issued a termination to the lease and in early 2024 voted to evict the center. Marin cannot afford to lose the center and its 110 subsidized childcare slots, when more than 800 eligible, low-income children are currently on the countywide waitlist.

After a long period of exploring alternative sites and options, a group of community members convened to develop a creative funding and sale proposal. To prevent closure, the RVSD and the center agreed to a path forward which includes selling the property to an intermediary nonprofit, which will then lease the facility to the center to allow it to continue its operations. The County, Marin Community Foundation, Town of Fairfax and other benefactors raised more than \$2M for the property purchase.