



November 6th, 2022

Re: Cindy López-Chastain
Early Childhood Community Oversight and Advisory Committee – applicant Seat #8

To the Rules Committee of the Board of Supervisors,

I have had the privilege of calling Cindy, a colleague, mentor, and friend for the past six years. I met Cindy when I was an inclusion specialist at Support for Families on the Inclusion Networks project. The project's outcomes were to support three early childhood programs to build the capacity of early childhood educators to develop inclusive practice and environments for children with disabilities and their families. A year into the project, some of our team struggled with building relationships and providing authentic, responsive supports to the teachers and programs. One of the pilot program teams came to us to voice their concerns. They brought their internal bilingual speech and language pathologist, to the meeting to help articulate their concerns and recommendations.

This was the first time I met Cindy. After listening to Cindy explain how she supports the teaching teams at this program, as a speech and language pathologist consultant we knew what our project was missing: a holistic view of children and families, cultural humility, and a genuine connection with and respect for educators. Teachers who have worked with Cindy feel heard, respected, valued, and supported. They show deeper understanding, and reflection of how to connect with children and families. Throughout her career, Cindy has maintained a strong stance of inclusion for children with disabilities and equitable teaching practices in early childhood programs. Teachers and specialists who work with Cindy feel confident, competent and have a true belief in inclusive settings for children of all abilities.

Families who have partnered with Cindy feel empowered to be advocates for their child and their child's education. As her colleague, I have learned what true commitment and dedication to children in early childhood settings looks like. It is empathy and respect, a willingness to listen without judgment, and a genuine desire to understand how to better support teaching teams and their programs. It is understanding and respecting perspectives that are different from your own. It is knowing the importance of slowing down to ask the hard questions and admitting when what you're doing is no longer effective.

Cindy has shown everyone who has had the honor of working with her that what matters is access and support for children and families. She has reminded us all to listen, ask, respect, follow through, and pivot when needed. Born and raised in San Francisco as a bilingual speaker, Cindy has spent decades navigating the various systems in the early childhood world to provide access and support to children with disabilities and their families. She continues to serve those who need support the most and are often the least likely to seek them out. The Early Childhood Community Oversight and Advisory Committee is unlikely to find someone with deeper roots in the ECE community or a more committed and successful approach to serving children with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ramya Krishna
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