

# Greater Cincinnati Early Childhood Collaborative

## Understanding Parent / Caregiver Perspectives

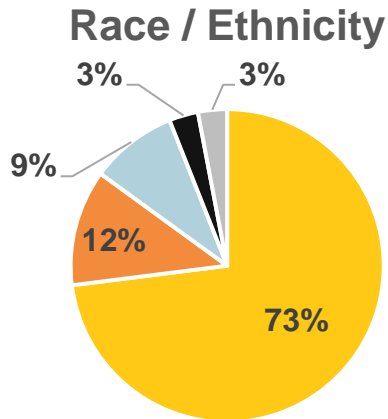


Community  
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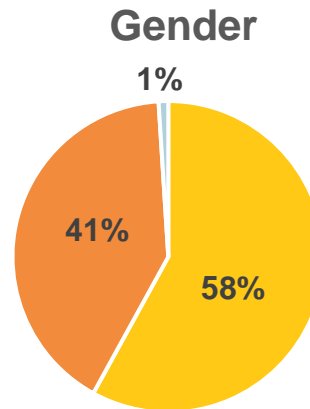
by SHARE OUR STRENGTH

# Through focus groups and a survey, we heard from ~150 parents / caregivers in Hamilton Co.

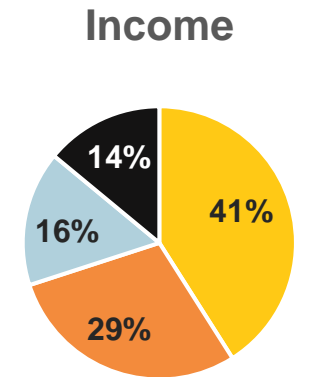
## Participant Demographics\*



- Black / African American
- White
- Latinx / Hispanic
- Multiracial
- Unknown



- Female
- Male
- Unknown



- <\$34,999
- \$35K - 74,999K
- \$75K - 99,999K
- >\$100,000K

**Parent representative members of the collaborative helped design and conduct the focus groups and survey, which were available in English and Spanish.**

*\*See Appendix for more demographic detail on the survey respondents and focus group participants.*

# Hamilton County parents care deeply about their children's holistic development

*This word cloud depicts key terms that parents offered in response to the question:  
"What do you hope or dream for your children by the time they are 5?"*



# Key Insights

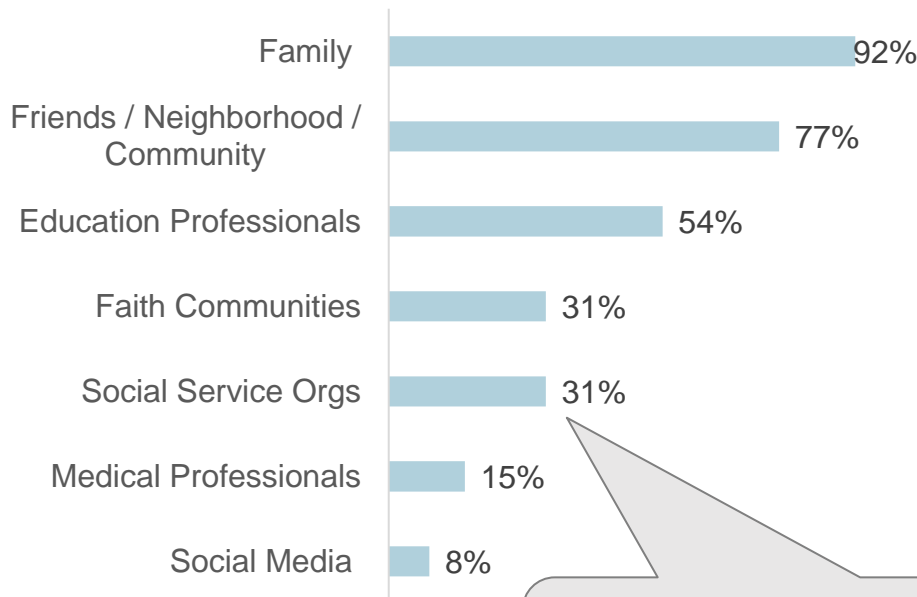
1. **Informal networks** currently provide the greatest support to parents in making their dreams for their children a reality
2. **Economic challenges** are central to many of the barriers parents face in helping their children thrive
3. **Racial discrimination** and **lack of cultural sensitivity** also present significant barriers
4. Parents experience **challenges with quality, affordability, and accessibility of health care and childcare services**
5. Parents crave **deeper connection** with their communities and the available support systems

*\*See Appendix for the specific questions asked in the focus groups and survey.*

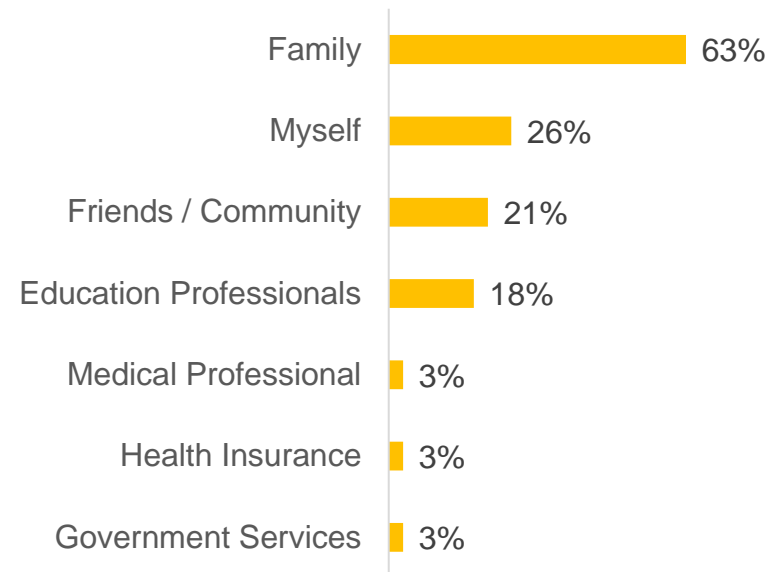
# Informal networks currently provide greatest support to parents in making dreams a reality

Responses to the question “What or who is helping you make your hopes for your children a reality?”

## Focus Group Responses\*



## Survey Responses\*



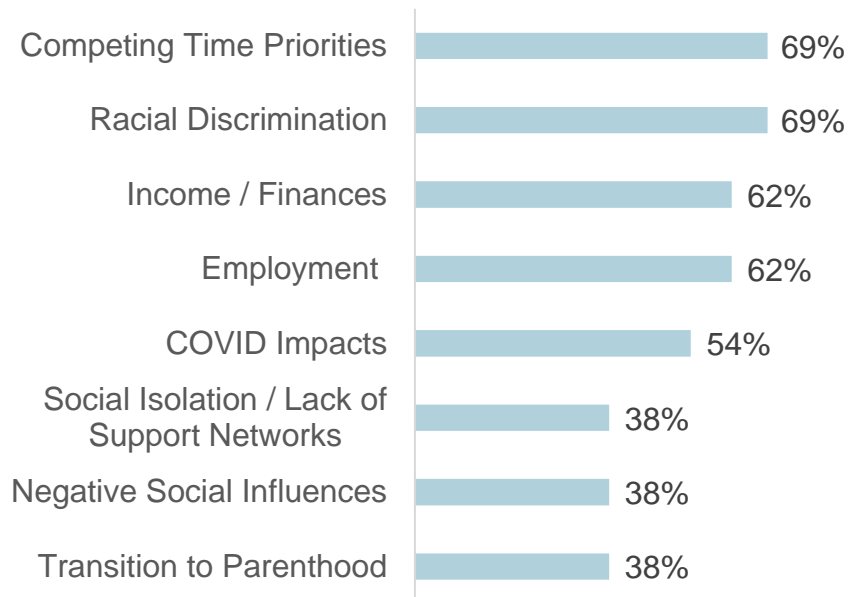
Specific organizations were rarely mentioned; when parents could get connected to support programs or services, those were valuable, but they often only heard about them through word of mouth

\*Focus group data reflects percent of focus groups in which a theme was mentioned; survey data reflects percent of individual responses mentioning a theme.

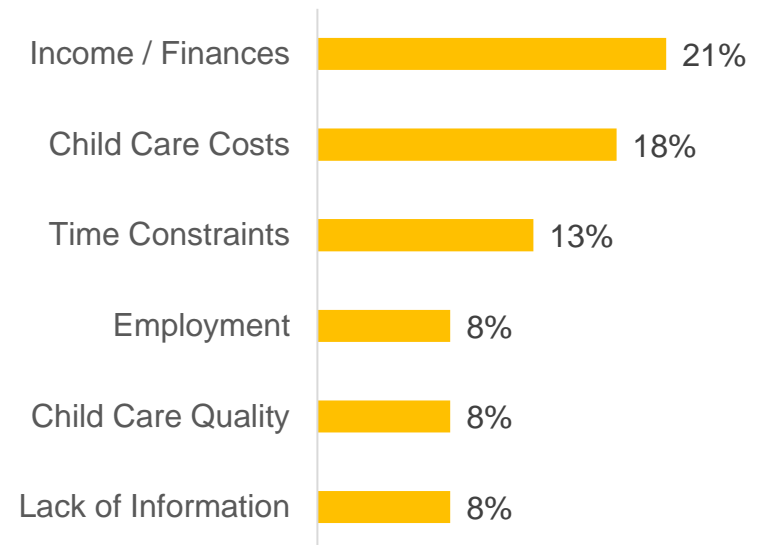
# The greatest challenges parents face are connected to broader societal challenges

When asked about the greatest barriers to making their dreams for their children a reality, parents / caregivers most commonly cited **financial challenges, lack of time, racial discrimination, employment challenges, and COVID**.

## Focus Group Responses



## Survey Responses



# Economic challenges are core barriers parents face in helping their children thrive

## Parents frequently shared their experiences of:

- Inability to spend desired time with their children due to work demands and working multiple jobs to earn a living wage
- Family financial challenges
- COVID making financial challenges even worse

The financial constraints and time...having two or three jobs to meet financial needs of home and children impacts the time I have with my children and family

I have to work the night shift and don't have enough time for my child. My mom also depends on me financially and all this strains me financially because this is not what I want to do but have to do.

Finances become a challenge. Working makes it so you end up spending less time with children. I'm not always able to be there for my daughter so she can grow into who she wants to be.

# Parents have particular challenges related to the cost of childcare and health care

## Parents frequently shared their experiences of:

- High cost of childcare and challenges related to rigid eligibility requirements for childcare vouchers
- High cost of health insurance and healthcare

Childcare costs...that's number one. I fear even looking at these prices. I'm like "why are y'all charging this much to give my baby a nap and the wrong bottle and not sanitize what you just used"? People really need it and a lot don't have the finances to meet these rates.

There shouldn't be all these stipulations and eligibility requirements to get services. If I sit at home and don't have anything – I get ALL services – but if I get a job, my services become limited because the system thinks I have income. It's not fair.

I'm still in college and wasn't prepared to have a baby. I don't have a stable income so I couldn't pay for medical insurance. Everything is out of pocket. Sometimes I cannot meet the costs. I just have to decide to do without seeing a doctor and hope I'll be ok.



# Parents also described work environments that aren't supportive for parents of young kids

## Parents frequently shared their experiences of:

- Employers who undervalue parenting
- Employers making it difficult to take time off for medical appointments, school meetings or attend to their children's needs
- Lack of schedule flexibility
- Job locations not near childcare options

I was pregnant and my job promised me time off. With doctor's appointments, my supervisor didn't want me to go or asked me to reschedule. She didn't allow me to work from home when I felt sick. It was not good for my stress.

My boss is not understanding of me being a single working mom. It's not ok having to deal with the stress of employment conditions and then missing out on children's milestones and family opportunities.

I work in a big company with a tight schedule with no quality time to spend with my young kid. He is losing and so am I.

It's hard to find quality childcare near my home and we need childcare services near or at our employers so we can spend time at lunch or breaks.

# Racial discrimination and lack of cultural sensitivity present significant barriers

- Barriers include discrimination parents have experienced and concerns for what their children will experience
- In focus groups (where 90% of participants identified as people of color), challenges with racial discrimination were raised more than any other barrier to making their dreams for their children a reality
- Latinx / Hispanic parents were mostly likely to describe challenges related to language barriers or lack of cultural sensitivity among childcare and health care providers

Racism has been my major problem and my child feels insecure and afraid connecting with others.

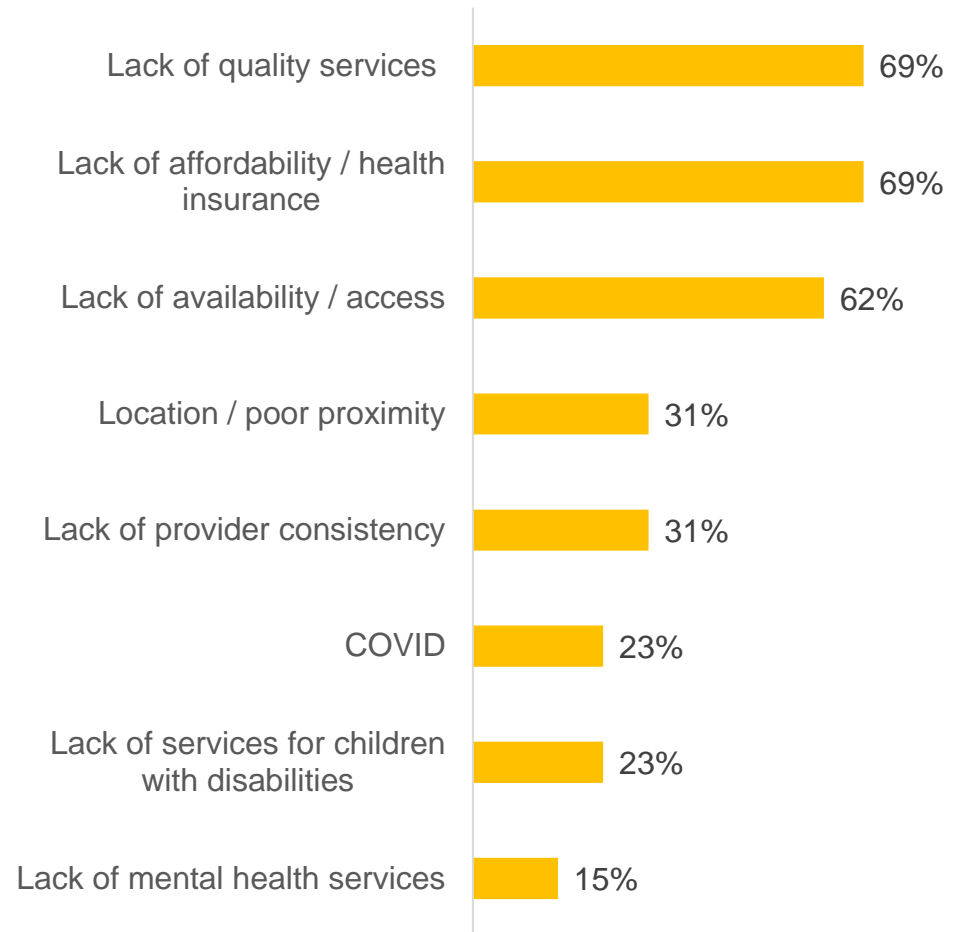
There's not enough support programs for Spanish speaking children and constant calls from pre-school teachers about our children not paying attention or misbehaving. We have doctors and teachers labeling Hispanic kids with learning issues as "trouble kids."

Schools often label Hispanic kids "behind and slow" or having learning disabilities. Staff need training as the children often do not understand English but can answer the same questions if asked in Spanish.

# Parents identified challenges with health care quality, affordability, and accessibility

**Focus Group Question:** *In the area of health care, what's not working well for you? What makes things hard?*

- Parents who are eligible for health insurance consistently cited it as helpful
- However, nearly 70% of focus groups cited affordability and lack of quality services as challenges
- Parents also described challenges with accessibility (geography, availability of appointments, response times) and lack of consistency in health care providers
- Although COVID presented challenges related to health care, telehealth was cited as a significant benefit to address a variety of health care needs



# Here's how parents described healthcare challenges in their own words

It's a challenge getting a reliable pediatrician who sees my child over time and knows him. Sometimes you go to the same practice and there's a different doctor.

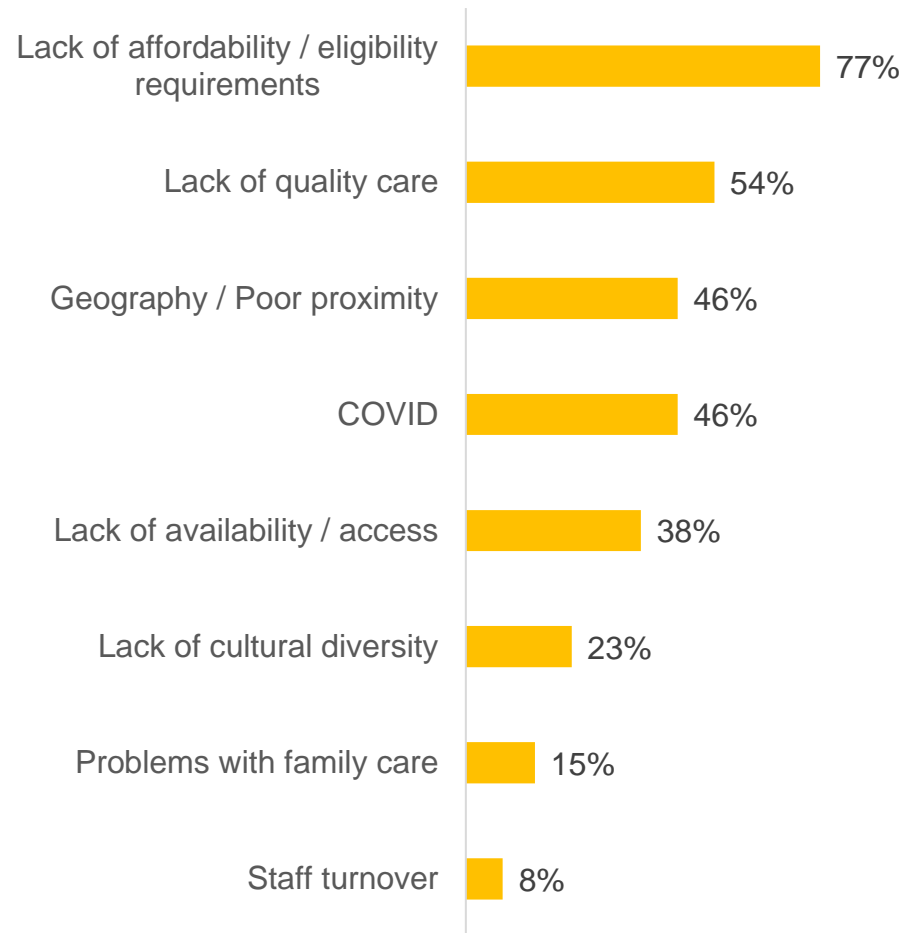
Taking too long to get appointments, rushed appointments, taking children back to treat the same condition and changing doctors due to staff shortages who seem stretched thin.

Families that are barely over income have to focus too much on work in order to afford basic services for their children. It is difficult and expensive to access medical services for undocumented children.

# Quality, affordability, and accessibility are also challenges in childcare

**Focus Group Question:** *In the area of childcare, what's not working well for you? What makes things hard?*

- For parents who can find or afford it, quality childcare is extremely helpful
- However, challenges in finding quality care (outside the home) were mentioned in the majority of focus groups
- In fact, 75% of parents responded they or a primary caregiver provided their own childcare
- Challenges include cost/eligibility requirements and geography/proximity
- COVID added challenges with concerns about safety and children's lack of socialization and learning with other children



# Here's how parents described childcare challenges in their own words

I can't afford daycare and it would be so beneficial to have vouchers, which got denied in certain states, where education is free until a certain age. It's unfair. It's like the system wants you stay at a certain level.

COVID put children at a disadvantage academically but especially socially because of limited hours and less children in daycare.

There's a complete lack of services for anybody who is over the Federal poverty level. One parent was \$100 over and her kids did not go to pre-school because they were not eligible for the local Head start program and she could not afford private preschool.

What has been a big pain for me are carefree teachers and bullies in school; by carefree, I mean teachers who don't really care about their job and the kids in their care.

# Parents crave deeper connection with their communities and support systems

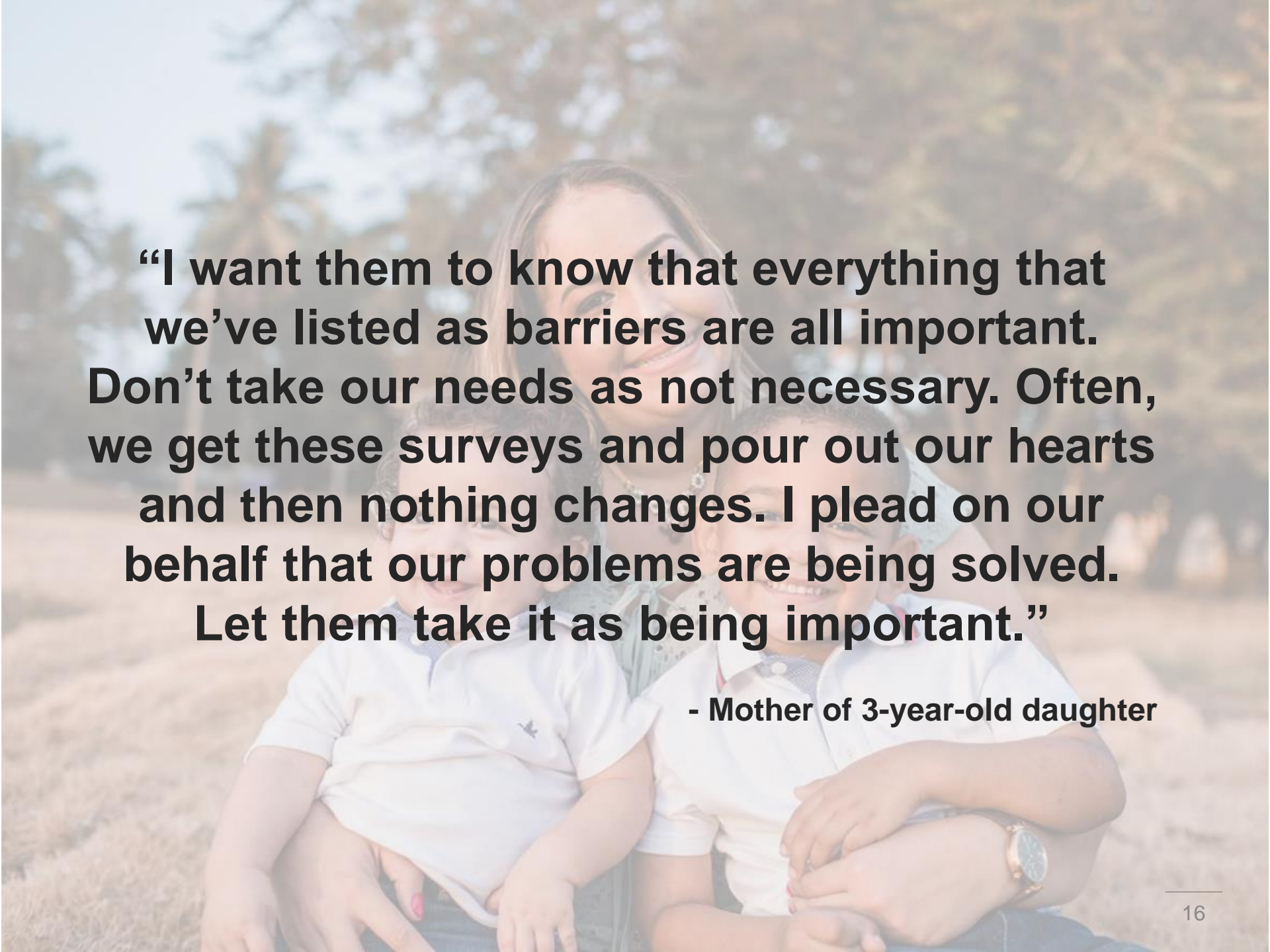
## Parents frequently shared their experiences of:

- Difficulty transitioning to parenthood
- Lack of information about available support and difficulty navigating systems to access support
- Lack of neighborhood and recreational facilities

We don't have a recreation center in our community. We have to go far away just to get to recreational facilities that allow children to relax and help with stress.

There's a lack of information about providers and we need information about accessing services, navigating the system and a list of resources for little children.

I started a family at an early age and wasn't ready mentally or psychologically though I was financially ready. There's more than finances in taking care of children. I was stressed and lost sleep as my first child was physically disabled so I had to adapt. I didn't have proper family planning.

A woman with long brown hair is smiling and sitting on the ground with two young children. The children are also smiling. They are outdoors in a field with trees in the background. The woman is wearing a light-colored top and a watch on her left wrist. The children are wearing white shirts. The text is overlaid on the image.

**“I want them to know that everything that we’ve listed as barriers are all important. Don’t take our needs as not necessary. Often, we get these surveys and pour out our hearts and then nothing changes. I plead on our behalf that our problems are being solved. Let them take it as being important.”**

**- Mother of 3-year-old daughter**



# Parents offered specific ideas, particularly around strengthening connection



Parenting classes and support groups with better dissemination of information about available supports in an accessible, culturally sensitive manner



Parent ambassadors / system navigators / advocates



Co-location of services in neighborhoods



Childcare centers that are more accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive



Health care that is more affordable and culturally sensitive

# Appendix



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# Appendix: Focus Group Questions

1. What do you hope for the children you care for by the time they are 5?
2. What or who is helping you make those dreams a reality?
3. What are the biggest barriers to those dreams becoming reality?
4. In the areas of childcare, health care, and other family or community support services...
  - a. What's working well for you right now? What is most helpful?
  - b. What is not working well for you right now? What really makes things hard, makes you mad?
  - c. What ideas do you have for making things better?
5. What do you want policymakers and other early childhood leaders to know?
6. What do you need that you're not getting, for your child and you as a parent or caregiver?  
What's missing in your community that would support the healthy development of your children and family?
7. If you could wave a magic wand and make one change tomorrow to something about early childhood in Hamilton County, what one change would you make?

**Note:** Specific focus groups were hosted by Community Action Agency (Head Start Policy Council), Santa Maria Community Services, Grupo Fenix, and Waverly's Hope Child Care. Remaining focus groups were open invitation to any eligible participants.

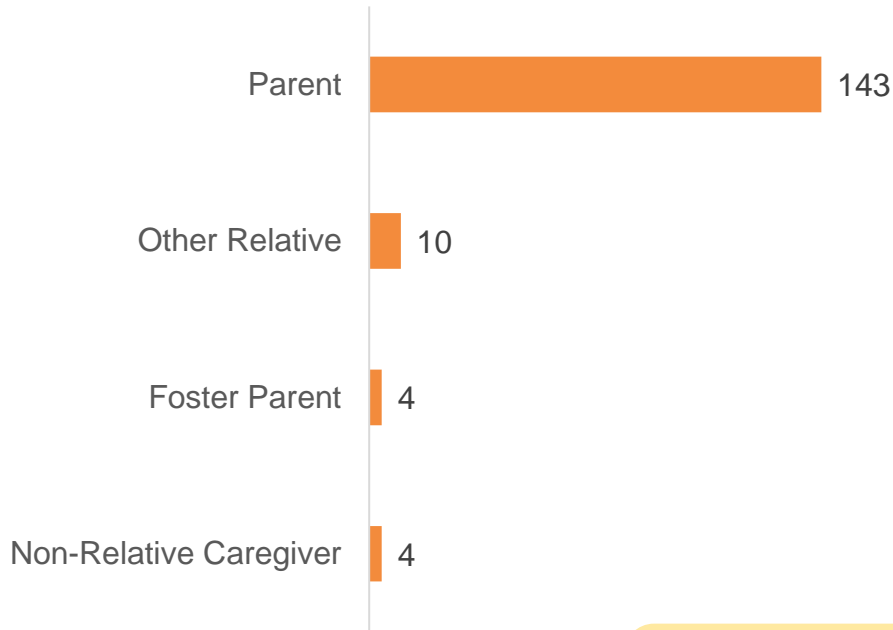
# Appendix: Survey Questions

1. What do you hope for your children by the time they are 5?
2. What is getting in the way of you making your hopes for your children a reality?
3. What or who is helping you make your hopes for your children a reality?
4. What is one thing that could change that would help make your hopes for your children a reality?
5. What type of childcare do you have for your children?
  - a. Parent or primary caregiver care
  - b. Center-based care
  - c. Family, friend, or neighbor care
  - d. Something else (please describe)

**Note:** Survey was available in both English and Spanish.

# Appendix: Additional Demographic Information

## Role



## Zip Code

