

NEWS**Marin IJ Readers' Forum for Oct. 29**

By **MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL** |

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Measure A helps 'most vulnerable' youngsters

We're writing on behalf of the Marin Promise Partnership to support Measure A, the Strong Start initiative.

Marin Promise is a countywide partnership of school and community leaders working together to make educational excellence a reality for all students in Marin, regardless of race or family income.

Though Marin is one of the wealthiest, best-educated counties in California, we also have the greatest gaps between privileged white children and economically disadvantaged children of color.

For example, while 62 percent of Marin students read proficiently by third grade, only 28 percent of economically disadvantaged children do.

This is an unacceptable gap. We should do better; and we will.

A grassroots coalition has come forward with a plan to provide our most

Research shows that preschool attendance is game-changing for young children. Ninety percent of white families in Marin send their children to preschool; however, this is not a choice for everyone.

Waiting lists for subsidized preschools, affordable for low-income families, are long and unmoving.

We can change this picture for our community with a yes vote on Measure A, assuring funding to consistently provide quality preschool, child care, after-school programs, and health care for Marin kids who need it the most.

Please join us, and the Marin Promise Partnership, in supporting Measure A — the first step on our path to educational excellence for all children in Marin County.

— *Ann Mathieson, executive director, Marin Promise Partnership*

— *David Wain Coon, co-chair, Marin Promise Partnership and president, College of Marin*

— *Michael Watenpaugh, co-chair, Marin Promise Partnership and superintendent of San Rafael City Schools*

— *Valerie Pitts, co-chair, Marin Promise Partnership and superintendent of Larkspur-Corte Madera School District*

Measure A fuels housing and social services

IJ columnist Dick Spotswood wants Marin to be like West Virginia and Oklahoma, saying they give free pre-K (which is not free full-day care and child care like Measure A proposes to provide). However, he does not make the most important comparison, the only one that counts, i.e. to San Francisco, Sonoma, Mendocino and Alameda counties.

These and other California counties do not provide free full-day child care to needy households.

Creation of this benefit only in Marin will cause families to flock to Marin for free day care. We see the growth in Marin's homeless population as neighboring counties cut back on benefits for the homeless, and Marin increases its benefits.

San Rafael has become an open sewer not far from Davidson Middle School and Boyd Park, etc. Currently, a permanent site is being sought for homeless to "live" year-round: so that will add to the cost of the Marin-only homeless benefit