

Fairfax County Budget Talking Points for Early Childhood Educators

Please join us on Wednesday, April 9th to let the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors know that early learning opportunities matter!

- ✓ **Step 1:** Sign up to speak on April 9th: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speaker_bos.htm (There are also hearings on the 8th and 10th but we are trying to reach critical mass!
- ✓ **Step 2:** Contact Mary Beth Testa at Marybeth@mbstsolutions.com to let us know you plan to be there so we can coordinate for the strongest action and message!
- ✓ **Step 3:** Check out the talking points below and plan to share your story on April 9th! *At the hearing, you'll have 3 minutes to speak. **THE ASK** is the thing we all want to emphasize. But we all have a particular story to share and aspects of this work that are most important to us. The talking points below are to help you make the most of your three minutes at the hearing.*

Talking Points

Introduction:

- My name is _____ and I am a *[teacher/director/your role in ece]* in Fairfax County. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.
- Fairfax is poised to make a significant investment in early learning. The budget proposal includes a \$714,000 increase in local contributions to early learning. I urge you to keep this proposed investment in the final budget.
- As an early childhood educator, I see first-hand how important early learning opportunities are.
- There are *[number]* teachers and staff in the program where I work. We all work so hard each day as educators of Virginia's youngest children.

Choose the share the following points that are most important to you:

- In fall 2012, 16% of kindergarteners in Fairfax County Public Schools did not meet reading benchmarks and approximately 4,500 children under age 5 are living in poverty in our county. While that may not sound like a lot, these are real children right here and we must work to reach them.
- The proposed investment includes opportunities to expand and support community-based programs and support children living in poverty to be ready for kindergarten.
- The investment will go to professional development, coaching and strengthening curriculum to improve the quality of private and faith-based child care, preschool and family day homes.
- This will expand options for parents to choose from among good quality, school readiness opportunities for their young children – important not just for preschoolers but beginning with infants while parents are at work supporting their families.
- The proposed investment also includes an increase in local matching funds for the Virginia Preschool Initiative to provide more preschool opportunities for low-income 4 year olds in community based

settings. This is especially important for Fairfax because we're not using all of the VPI slots allocated to us by the state.

- The budget proposal expands early learning opportunities in Fairfax beyond the significant investments in child care assistance and support for collaboration in the early childhood education sector through the Office for Children. We thank the Board of Supervisors for your leadership for this investment and leadership for tying the pieces together for a big picture of school readiness.

If you enroll children who pay with assistance (subsidy) and/or you're a VPI provider or a VPI preK teacher:

- As a VPI provider, I am able to enroll children who otherwise wouldn't have this opportunity for preK. Because of VPI, I am helping [number] four year olds to be ready for success in kindergarten and beyond and to have a positive experience every day right now.
- There are families in my program who are enrolled thanks to child care subsidy assistance and I know it makes a difference for their ability to go to work, for their peace of mind, and for their child's early development because I provide high-quality care and learning opportunities.
- *[Tip: make it personal! Speak briefly about a particular child's experience, or the way a family has benefited from access to your program, or the way you're able to provide a high-quality early learning environment.]*

If you do NOT enroll children who pay with assistance and/or you're NOT a VPI program:

- Though I'm not a VPI partner and my families don't typically qualify for VPI, I know that preK matters. The children in my program have great opportunities every day. Every child in our county should have this chance.
- Though none of my families pay with child care subsidy assistance, I know that it matters to our community and I support giving families the choices they need for high-quality care so they can work, whether their child is an infant, toddler, or preschooler.
- *[Tip: make it personal! Speak briefly about a particular child's experience, or the way a family has benefited from access to your program – across the income spectrum in our county, if parents work they need good reliable care for their young children - or the way you're able to provide a high-quality early learning environment.]*

The Ask:

- **We urge you to include the proposed \$714,000 investment for school readiness in the final county budget, and to look to the coming years with a plan for significantly expanding VPI participation.**

For questions please contact: Emily Griffey at Emily@vakids.org or Mary Beth Testa at Marybeth@mbstsolutions.com