



Fairfax County 2014 Local Officials, Local Decisions, Local Families: Take Action for Early Care and Education!

Early care and education policy and investment decisions are made each year at the federal, state *and* local levels. Right now, Virginia's city and county governments are taking action to balance local budgets and set priorities for the coming year. For early care and education, local leaders have responsibility for things like child care licensing details, professional development opportunities, Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) match funds and enrollment, and administering the child care assistance (subsidy) program. While many of Virginia's initiatives for early care and education are targeted specifically to at-risk families, and the early childhood educators and caregivers that support them, the decisions impact all of us across the community. Local leaders matter, and your voice counts!

Fairfax County is poised to make a significant investment in early learning through its unique and innovative Office for Children. But the Board of Supervisors will be juggling many different priorities and they'll need to hear from us about the importance of these investments so they stay in the final budget! Voices for Virginia's Children is excited for the opportunity to engage with advocates, early childhood educators, and families in Northern Virginia in 2014, helping to make sure that local leaders have the information they need to make decisions for children and families this year.

The Fairfax County Budget Proposal

The budget proposal includes a \$714,000 increase in local contributions to early learning. This includes:

- Over \$450,000 to expand and support community-based programs and support children living in poverty to reach school benchmarks.
 - 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.
- A \$150,000 increase in local matching funds for VPI to provide more preschool opportunities for low-income 4 year olds in community based settings. This would reach 50 more preschoolers; especially important for Fairfax because we're not more than 1,000 VPI slots allocated to us by the state. Although this is a significant expansion, Fairfax must leverage its history and experience as a leader in early childhood education in Virginia to extend this commitment to serve **all** of the at-risk young children in county.

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.

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 more information on getting involved locally in 2014, please contact Emily Griffey at Emily@vakids.org or Mary Beth Testa at Marybeth@mbstsolutions.com.