



Take Action for Early Care and Education in Fairfax County! School Readiness for NoVa 2015

Early care and education policy and investment decisions are made each year at the federal, state *and* local levels. The legislative session in Richmond was a whirlwind of activity with all-new attention to child care and early learning.

Work is already underway in city and county governments to balance local budgets and set priorities for the coming year. 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!

Without *your* support, it is unlikely that Fairfax would have maintained significant investments in school readiness in last year's budget proposal. Your help is needed to ensure those investments continue, and so that school readiness programs are not cut!

Take Action!

School Readiness for NoVa begins with parents and ends with school success! We urge the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to approve the proposed investments in school readiness services, child care subsidy access and payment rates, and expansion of after-school capacity. We urge the Board of Supervisors to reject the elimination of Healthy Families Fairfax and maintain the funds allocated to the program.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will be juggling many different priorities and they'll need to hear from us about the importance of these investments. They need to hear about all the links in School Readiness for NoVa!

**Please join Voices for Virginia's Children at the county budget hearing on Tuesday, April 7!
RSVP to attend by contacting Mary Beth Testa at marybeth@mbstsolutions.com!**

Please spread the word on social media using #SchoolReadiness4NoVa. You'll find posts you can share at www.facebook.com/vakids and www.twitter.com/vakids!

School Readiness in the Fairfax County Budget Proposals

The FY16 Fairfax County budget proposal includes another significant step forward for early care and education:

- A new \$960,000 investment in school readiness services, including:
 - expanding school readiness activities in support of community programs serving young children
 - matching funds for an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant
 - increasing access to child care subsidy for low-income working families
- An additional \$1 million to increase the reimbursement rates for child care subsidy
 - This would bring rates to the same level as the state funding
- An additional \$150,000 to open two new school-age child care spaces

Unfortunately, the county budget proposal includes a big step backward: the elimination of local funds for Healthy Families Fairfax, meaning 613 current families will lose crucial services.

In addition, the county and school division budget does not include any new expansion of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Although Fairfax has a large VPI enrollment, over 1,400 eligible at-risk four year-olds do not have access to VPI. The VPI-Plus grant is a great opportunity for approximately 70 four-year-olds in Fairfax County. More opportunities are needed, with local and state investments working together. We encourage Fairfax to develop a plan to serve all of the at-risk children eligible for VPI.

News You Can Use

You'll find more information about Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria action for FY2016 at <http://vakids.org/topics/school-readiness-4-nova-opportunities-action-2015>.

For more info on getting involved in 2015, please visit www.vakids.org and contact Emily at Emily@vakids.org or Mary Beth at marybeth@mbstsolutions.com!