

# 2015 EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY NETWORK UNIFIED AGENDA

## BUILD THE PATH TO VIRGINIA'S PROSPERITY



The Path to Virginia's Prosperity starts with early childhood education. We must continue to construct this path to achieve our goals of student success and a prepared future workforce. We've broken ground on the pathway and have a solid foundation in place, starting with home visiting and early intervention for infants and families, to a successful preschool program for at-risk four year-olds. Yet due to limited resources and lack of infrastructure, we cannot reach all of the young children and families who could benefit.

**To ensure Virginia's future prosperity it is time to build our early childhood system.**

### TO BUILD THE PATH TO VIRGINIA'S PROSPERITY WE MUST:

1. Continue investments in two-generation approaches to addressing poverty and school readiness
2. Ensure safe child care environments for all children
3. Improve quality by improving the skills of early childhood educators
4. Maximize the Virginia Preschool Initiative through a mixed-delivery approach
5. Align our existing resources across agencies to improve coordination and collaboration

Despite a difficult budget climate every year in recent memory, our state has recognized that investments in early childhood pay off when children enter school ready to learn. As we face continued budget pressure, we must not take any steps backwards on this pathway by investing in the elements that provide the biggest bang for the buck.



*The Early Childhood Policy Network is a forum for stakeholders to share common interests in early childhood issues and come to consensus on shared priorities.*

*The members of the Early Childhood Policy Network include: Child Care Aware Virginia • Child Development Resources • Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU • ChildSavers • CHIP of Virginia/Parents as Teachers State Office • JustChildren/Legal Aid Justice Center • Prevent Child Abuse Virginia/Healthy Families Virginia • Hopkins House • Smart Beginnings Historic Triangle • The Children's Center • Virginia Alliance of Family Child Care Providers • Virginia Association of Community Services Boards • Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health • Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics • Virginia Education Association • Virginia First Cities • Virginia Head Start Association • Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education • Virginia Council for Private Education*

# THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE PATH TO PROSPERITY

## 1. CONTINUE INVESTMENT IN TWO GENERATION APPROACHES



- Fully fund comprehensive home visiting programs, CHIP of Virginia and Healthy Families. Despite successes helping families gain employment and meet children’s developmental needs, our statewide home visiting network only reaches 12% of need.
- Fully fund early intervention (IDEA Part C) for infants and toddlers with developmental delays. Each year local systems must balance budget decisions with providing timely access to developmental therapies.

## 2. ENSURE SAFE CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL CHILDREN



- Virginia has reached a crucial moment to ensure that all children are in safe child care settings that promote healthy development. The state must implement basic health and safety protections for children and ensure accountability for non-relative caregivers to give working parents options for safe, high quality care in every community. We must review the content of our standards to uphold children’s safety and school readiness and promote uniform enforcement.

## 3. IMPROVE QUALITY BY IMPROVING THE SKILLS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS



- Early childhood professionals are the backbone of the quality of early care and education. Virginia must review the opportunities and barriers for professional development across early learning settings and identify the resources for educators to improve quality. We should define a vision for quality across all early learning settings.

## 4. MAXIMIZE THE VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE THROUGH A MIXED-DELIVERY APPROACH



- Over a quarter of the preschool opportunities for at-risk four year-olds are not offered in some localities due to lack of local funds and classroom space. We must increase enrollment in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) by reducing these two barriers to participation. To fully maximize our preschool initiative, we should encourage a mixed delivery approach involving private, faith-based and community partners.

## 5. ALIGN RESOURCES TO IMPROVE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION



- Virginia’s early learning programs are fragmented across agencies and sectors. To leverage our limited resources, we must develop a vision for an infrastructure for early childhood in Virginia that supports collaboration, alignment and coordination.

## HELP BUILD THE PATH TO VIRGINIA’S PROSPERITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT EMILY GRIFFEY, VOICES FOR VIRGINIA’S CHILDREN AT [EMILY@VAKIDS.ORG](mailto:EMILY@VAKIDS.ORG) OR 804-649-0184.