



April __, 2016

Dear Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

Voices for Virginia's Children and the undersigned organizations – program providers, advocates, and leaders in this community – appreciate that the Fiscal Year 2017 budget maintains funds for school readiness services, including child care, preschool and home visiting. We thank you for your leadership for past investment and leadership for tying the pieces together for a big picture of school readiness.

We urge you to invest boldly in FY17 in in the school readiness services provided by the Fairfax County Office for Children; in child care subsidy for working families; in the school-age child care program; in the local contribution to the Virginia Preschool Initiative; and in Healthy Families home visiting.

Growing numbers of children are living in poverty in the Commonwealth – and Fairfax is not immune to this or its devastating effects on young children. More than 23,000 children in Fairfax are living in poverty and 28% of FCPS students receive free and reduced lunch. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience toxic stress and trauma that has been linked to poorer academic and health outcomes than their more advantaged peers. We must play a part in the solutions here in Fairfax. Additional investments are needed.

The 2016 session of the General Assembly concluded last month, setting the stage for more opportunities ahead for early care and education. The Fairfax model of school readiness is gaining attention, not just for prekindergarten opportunities for four-year-olds but also the important work for children birth to age five.

Additional investments are needed to achieve access to affordable, high-quality early care and education in Fairfax. This investment 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.

Fairfax County's investments in school readiness services, child care, preschool, and home visiting are crucial and matter today and in the future.

Sincerely,

Voices for Virginia's Children

(add your organization or early childhood program name here by contacting Mary Beth at marybeth@mbstsolutions.com by April 6, 2016)