



March 3, 2022

The Honorable Janet D. Howell  
Chair, Finance and Appropriations Committee  
Senate of Virginia  
Pocahontas Building, Room E509  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Barry D. Knight  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Virginia House of Delegates  
Pocahontas Building, Room W1312  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Senator Howell and Delegate Knight,

Virginia Promise Partnership thanks members of the Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committees for including strategic investments in early childhood care and education in the House and Senate budgets. These investments will play a pivotal role in increasing child care access and affordability, stabilizing the child care sector, and meeting rising demand for services as parents return to work in-person to support their families.

As negotiations over the final biennial budget continue, we respectfully encourage conferees to ensure the inclusion of important provisions that will enable Virginia to serve more children, with more choices for families. This includes:

**Funding for the Mixed Delivery Preschool Grant Program, as included in the introduced and Senate budgets.** By supporting public-private preschool delivery, Mixed Delivery expands the pool of child care options, allowing parents across the Commonwealth to choose the program and setting that meet the needs of their child and family. Additional funding would allow the program to serve more at-risk three- and four-year-old children, and to establish a pilot for up to 200 children under three years of age each year. Parents need access, especially for their youngest children, to return to work; providers have the longest wait lists for children under age three.

**Extending flexibilities and improvements to Child Care Subsidy Program eligibility, as included in the House budget.** The Child Care Subsidy Program assists eligible families with paying child care costs. The Partnership supports extending expanded child care subsidy eligibility to families earning up to 85% of the state median income through FY2024.

**Funding to expand Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) access to three-year-olds, as included in the introduced and Senate budgets.** VPI enables schools to serve at-risk preschoolers in high-quality settings that support children's healthy growth and development. This funding would enable localities to more fully serve three-year-old children through VPI programs.

**Improvements to the background check process to address widespread childcare staffing shortages, as included in the House budget.** The Partnership supports proposed improvements to the background check process offered to address ongoing childcare staffing shortages without compromising the safety of Virginia’s children.

**Funding to increase childcare capacity in southwest Virginia, as included in the Senate budget.** The Partnership supports allocating funding under the American Rescue Plan Act to increase childcare capacity in southwest Virginia. This much-needed funding would allow the United Way of Southwest Virginia to support new regional child development centers and serve additional children ages birth to five in the region.

**Funding to support out-of-school time programming, as included in the Senate budget.** The Partnership supports allocating funding to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program to support afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs for school-age children.

Access to quality early childhood care and education is essential to the well-being of Virginia’s communities and economy. Without a strong early learning system, parents cannot work, children cannot learn, and providers cannot operate. It is imperative that Virginia continue to invest in our early learning system in order to support the workforce of today and develop a strong workforce of tomorrow.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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Cc: The Honorable Richard L. Saslaw  
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.  
The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
The Honorable Stephen D. Newman  
The Honorable Mamie E. Locke  
The Honorable George L. Barker  
The Honorable Mark D. Sickles  
The Honorable Luke E. Torian  
The Honorable Terry L. Austin  
The Honorable Robert S. Bloxom, Jr.  
The Honorable Emily M. Brewer  
Ms. April Kees, Staff Director, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
Ms. Anne Oman, Staff Director, House Appropriations Committee