



County Manager's Office

Memo

To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Drew Cummings, Chief of Staff
Date: 12/20/19
Re: Partnering with EDCI for Durham County Early Childhood Action Plan

Durham County government and the community around it have done much in recent years to strengthen our early childhood systems. The County's investment in universal pre-K is unusual in the level of funding committed, the system-wide level of coordination, and the system-wide focus on high quality. The work that has launched from the State of Durham's Young Children report, perhaps especially around issues of childhood trauma, is significant, and the County is also investing in a new position focused on early childhood systems coordination. Work associated with Duke University, including efforts to capitalize on the near-comprehensive contact Duke Pediatrics has with Durham's children and that Family Connects Durham has with newborns in the county, are also worthy of (and receiving) national notice.

The State of North Carolina completed its Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP) in early 2019 (an executive summary is attached to this agenda item) and provides a helpful template of action areas and common metrics that local governments can use to create their own ECAP. The state is *interested* in having local governments create their own and in supporting that work because it believes local focus on these same areas will help strengthen early childhood work across the state.

The East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) has been working for the better part of a decade to create a high-functioning pipeline of community partners serving young children in East Durham. In recent years they have repeatedly expressed interest in, and energy for, the idea of leading community-wide efforts to deepen and improve our early childhood service continuum. County staff have discussed with them the possibility of EDCI leading that kind of effort, an effort which would result in a Durham Early Childhood Action Plan. The action plan would include prioritized service changes and enhancements across all our early childhood continuum. EDCI is excited about this possibility, especially as their organization drops the "E" from their name and becomes the Durham Children's Initiative over the course of this coming year.

Staff believe that such a plan could be very helpful in guiding coordinated future action in this arena and also for the successful solicitation of private and philanthropic support for implementation. Staff are therefore supportive of the attached proposal for an 18 month process with limited County support (up to \$50,000 in

FY19-20 and up to \$100,000 in FY20-21) and led by EDCI, to engage many additional partners and stakeholders to create a Durham County Early Childhood Action Plan.

Finally, staff believe that the timing is right to launch this effort. The County itself will have more bandwidth through the hiring of an early childhood systems coordinator. The recently announced \$4 million SAMHSA grant which funds the Center for Child and Family Health and numerous other agencies to improve social and emotional wellness of Durham children ages 0-8. The County is in the process of applying for Pritzker Foundation Community Innovation Grant to expand and improve services for children 0-3. The County's Pre-K investments continue to grow. Boston Basics may be launched this coming year as a community-wide early childhood communication platform. The opportunity *and* need to understand and coordinate all these related efforts as much as possible is critical. Staff do not believe the County has the internal capacity to do that, but believes that (E)DCI has both the energy and capacity to coordinate and lead this work on behalf of the community.