

Resolution to Create an Early Childhood Education and Development Fund in Buncombe County

Whereas, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners has established a strategic priority to ensure that every child in Buncombe County has an equal opportunity to thrive during their first 2,000 days, including access to quality early childhood education.

Whereas, the Board of Commissioners has identified the following goals related to this priority:

- Collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders for a coordinated system approach.
- Increase the availability of high-quality early childhood care and education with an emphasis on Pre-K programs.
- Address issues of affordability, both for providers in a sustainable business model and for families in access to care.
- Support a robust career track in the field of early education, with development ladders from entry level to highly educated, credentialed, seasoned professionals.
- Cultivate a system that responds to the needs of families, such as those impacted by trauma, poverty and addiction.

Whereas, there are estimated 11,646 children between the ages of 0-4 in Buncombe County, yet only approximately one third of these children are enrolled in licensed early childhood education programs.

Whereas, 46% of children in our community live in poor or low-income homes and 21% of children experience food insecurity.

Whereas, high-quality preschool and Pre-K programs are proven to provide measurable short- and long-term results for children in the areas of education, health, and future earnings.

Whereas, high-quality preschool and Pre-K programs are also proven to provide measurable short- and long-term results for the peers, families and communities of children served by these programs, including a 13% return on investment¹ for every dollar invested in quality early childhood education.

Whereas, there is a well-documented local shortage of quality early childhood education programs and families face many barriers to accessing existing program, including affordability.

Whereas, there is a well-documented shortage of qualified teachers and staff in classrooms and centers.

Whereas, it will require collaboration, innovation and a significant investment of both public and private funding in order to scale up the current local early childhood education system to meet documented needs.

Therefore be it resolved that the Buncombe Board of Commissioners:

¹ The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. <<https://heckmanequation.org/resource/faq-lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program/>>.

- Authorize the creation of an Early Childhood Education and Development Fund for the purpose of annually investing \$3.6 million beginning in the FY2020 budget with an annual increase of 2% in future years.
- This funding will be allocated to prioritize creating new preschool and Pre-K classrooms to serve more children; implementing workforce development strategies to recruit and retain qualified teachers; supporting strategies for scaling up effective programs; and providing support services for children and families enrolled in preschool and Pre-K programs.
- Instruct county staff to develop a structure for community partners to apply to the Fund; develop appropriate mechanisms for the allocation of funds; and propose different models for how funding decisions will be made.
- Create an Early Childhood Education sub-committee of the County Commission comprised of 3 County Commissioners. The committee members will be appointed to serve two-year terms starting in January 2019. The purpose of the sub-committee will be to engage with community partners, solicit public input and make policy and investment recommendations to the Commission. All formal decisions on investments and policies must be made by the full Commission.