

# Fight for kids

*The Herald-Sun*

Sunday, February 13, 2011

I am writing this letter on behalf of Durham's Partnership for Children to recognize Gov. Beverly Perdue's long-standing support of Smart Start.

We commend her for prioritizing our young children's futures. Perdue's instrumental role in developing an Early Childhood Advisory Council that supports the Ready, Set, Go! Initiative shows her continued focus on investing in young children.

Research shows that 90 percent of brain development occurs before children enter kindergarten and that high-quality early childhood programs produce impactful results, creating brighter, more successful students. The integrated system of early care and education, family support, and health services, strengthened through the governor's vision, has made North Carolina a national, innovative leader that believes in investing now for future success.

We look forward to seeing our statewide early childhood system expand to support the growing population of those in need of critical services. In Durham County there are 25,218 children birth to age 5, up from 18,613 in 2000, and 26.5 percent of those live in poverty. We know that every child needs safe, healthy, and caring environments in the earliest years to ensure reaching fullest potential and productivity over a lifetime. We encourage Perdue to continue to stand up for this generation of children who will become North Carolina's next generation of learners and leaders.

*Laura J.S. Benson, Executive Director*  
*Durham's Partnership for Children*