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NEWS RELEASE

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Durham's Partnership for Children receives \$322,000 cut from the NC Legislature in Smart Start and More at Four funds

Durham, NC – Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative, announced last week that cuts from the NC legislature will have financial impact in Durham. The legislative cut to Smart Start will result in a reduction to Durham's contract with the North Carolina Partnership for Children of more than \$200,000. In addition, legislative cuts were made to the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program this year. Durham will receive \$101,000 less funding for the 420 More at Four slots in Durham from the Office of Early Learning at the Department of Public Instruction.

Smart Start funds have been cut yearly since 2001; last fiscal year's grant was cut by nearly 14 percent. This year will be the first that Durham County has also received a cut in funds for More at Four, the Pre-Kindergarten program that serves at-risk 4-year-olds.

"This cut has come at the same time when the community's need for services is increasing," said Marsha Basloe, Executive Director of Durham's Partnership for Children. "With the reduction in funds toward Smart Start funded programs and the More at Four program, the entire early childhood system in Durham will have additional challenges." Fewer Smart Start dollars today are invested in Durham County children, birth to age 5, compared with 10 years ago. In 2000, our community had 7,000 fewer children and fewer needs. More resources must be allocated to early care and education.

Despite these cuts, Durham's Partnership for Children strives to continue to provide distinct, quality services for Durham County's young children birth to age 5 in the areas of early care and education, health and family support.

Research has shown that a child's learning begins at birth and develops as children are engaged and challenged in high quality learning environments. These early learning environments are increasing in quality and accessibility as a direct result of the More at Four program and Smart Start and its partnering programs. These services must be maintained for vulnerable young children and their families, who have been impacted by the recession, loss of jobs, and extended unemployment.

Bill Bryant, President of Bryant Investment Management Group and the Partnership's Board Vice Chair adds: "Children's early experiences can create a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. Investing in the very young makes sense and economic growth is reliant on a well-educated population that begins with early childhood education."

About Durham's Partnership for Children - Making young children a priority.

Founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County, the Partnership works as an independent, local nonprofit that serves young children birth to age 5 and their families under North Carolina's nationally recognized initiative to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. For more than 15 years, the Partnership has helped working parents pay for child care, improve the quality of child care and provided health and family support services to thousands of Durham County families with young children. The Partnership works to achieve its mission *To mobilize and unify the Durham community to create and support innovative and successful approaches to serving the needs of children birth to age 5 and their families*, by working with funded partners, groups and organizations in Durham County to support and coordinate efforts impacting young children and their families. The Partnership also administers the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program in Durham County serving more than 400 children and the new Early Head Start Grant serving Durham infants and toddlers. For more information about the Partnership, visit www.dpfc.net or call 919-403-6960, ext. 219.