



## Legislative Messages and Talking Points

### Key Messages

- Durham's future prosperity depends on how we strengthen and build our communities today, beginning in the early years.
- Science tells us that children's early experiences can create a strong or weak foundation for **all** future learning, behavior and health. We must provide quality early education experiences from the beginning.
- Quality early care is a wise investment during difficult economic times as it allows families to work and helps create future generations of productive citizens who will contribute to our society.

### **During a weakened economy is the wrong time to dump the state's 'best earning stock' – early childhood care and education.**

- Tough times mean making decisions that offer the greatest return on investment (ROI). Research by economists from prestigious universities and research think tanks, such as Harvard University and the Brookings Institution, have shown that the public return on strategic investment in quality early childhood education and care can return up to \$12 for every \$1 invested. ***What other public investment has this type of long-term return?*** This research also demonstrates that at-risk children who participate in high-quality early learning are more likely to graduate from high school, earn higher wages as adults, and are less likely to need remedial education, use public assistance or be involved in crime.

### **Early childhood education supports and stabilizes our local and state economies.**

- With the 6 percent cut in funding this year, Durham's Partnership for Children has already seen the impact of cutting vital child care subsidies designated for high-quality child care programs. In a slowing economy, that number will only grow if more families become eligible for subsidy. If families must choose between early education expenses and their basic needs, children may be left in unsafe, lower quality care arrangements that can affect their school readiness and their families' stability at the workplace by way of increased absenteeism and lower productivity.
- Given the role that child care plays in our communities, it is essential that during this economic downturn we protect vital child care programs. In the face of increased budget cuts, constituents are relying on their elected officials to advocate for the continued need for available and affordable high quality care. Investing in quality child care initiatives helps both our economy and our children thrive in the long run.

### **A child that is left behind before entering school stays behind.**

- The achievement gap, often discussed in the context of K-12 education, begins well before kindergarten, with many children entering school without basic social, emotional and cognitive skills to perform in school. This gap is readily affirmed by the public school system. According to Dr. Carl Harris, Durham Public Schools Superintendent, the widest achievement gap is seen the first day of kindergarten. A child that enters school without the critical social, emotional and cognitive skills to thrive will stay behind. In order to help remedy the burgeoning trend of disconnected youth across Durham County, we must invest in our children in the early years. Prevention outperforms intervention.

### **Early childhood education is the foundation of all K-12 education.**

- We recognize that the Governor and members of the North Carolina General Assembly will have to make tough economic decisions over the next two legislative sessions. Nonetheless, we urge legislators to treat early childhood education programs in the same fashion as other education programs across the state. If Durham's Partnership for Children, Durham's Smart Start agency continues to incur cuts, the early childhood system in Durham County will be even more compromised.