



## Virginia's Early Childhood Success Act

**Problem Statement:** While recognition of the importance of early childhood education has steadily grown in Virginia, as evidenced by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce Blueprint, establishment of the School Readiness Committee, and modest increases in state investment, Virginia lacks a comprehensive vision and durable framework for an optimal early childhood education system.

**Solution Statement:** To deliver the education and workforce outcomes Virginia needs to remain economically competitive, Virginia should adopt the "Early Childhood Success Act" a policy and fiscal framework for a cohesive system for early childhood education (birth to five years old) during the 2019 General Assembly Session.

- The framework, as described in the Act, details the governance, accountability, and funding structure for all publicly funded early education programs and stipulates the responsibilities of relevant partners including higher education, K-12 education, localities, business and private stakeholders related to the optimal development of Virginia's youngest citizens. The framework calls for local/regional demonstration pilots to inform and drive innovation and continuous improvement.
- Development of the Early Childhood Success Act is the result of bi-partisan leadership among the legislature, the Administration, the Virginia Chamber, and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and builds on the work of the Joint Subcommittee on VPI Reform, the School Readiness Committee and relevant agencies and partners. Implementation would proceed in phases over the next four years.

**We believe Virginia can lead the nation in delivering an equitable, innovative, and effective public-private early childhood system by passing the Early Childhood Success Act.**

**The Objective:** Significantly improved the outcomes at all levels of Virginia's educational and workforce pipeline by establishing an effective, equitable, and accountable system of early childhood care and education that will promote kindergarten readiness, inform and support working families, and ably serve as the foundation for sustained lifelong learning and achievement for all Virginia's children.

**The Act is built on the following priorities:**

- Recognition of early childhood development as strategic to the state's overall **economic development** delivering both a necessary work support and a key learning opportunity
- Ensure **parental support and choice** through diverse, high-quality, affordable options
- **Streamlined/consolidated state-level governance** of early childhood programs to better align policies, standards, funding, and reduce regulatory burden
- Promote **regional level capacity and flexibility** to design systems with measurable outcomes to address their unique school readiness and workforce support needs
- Support **roles and responsibilities for both public and private sectors** in delivering school readiness by protecting the capacity of private providers as essential partners; leveraging resources and innovation via increased public-private partnerships; utilizing private sector strategies such as incentives and integrated financing

## The Early Childhood Success Act calls for:

### 1) Creation of a Unified Early Care and Education System that will:

- Transfer lead authority for relevant early childhood federal programs (CCDF and Head Start Collaboration Office) from the Virginia Department of Social Services to the Virginia Department of Education
  - Timeline and plan submitted to General Assembly by September 2019
  - Transfer shall be cost-neutral and fully completed by July 1, 2020
  - The Board of Education shall ensure the unified early care and education system will:
    - Establish service and performance targets for children birth to five to be used in publicly-funded programs
    - Create a uniform quality rating and improvement system for publicly-funded programs
    - Establish consistent quality standards for all types of publicly-funded programs that are indicative of child outcomes
    - Align standards for the licensing of publicly-funded child care facilities with quality standards
    - Identify and support effective implementation of instructional tools in publicly-funded programs
    - Create system to incentivize and reward performance of publicly-funded programs to ensure teachers are compensated for outcomes-based achievements
    - Align and support an early childhood professional development system that provides affordable access to competency-building, stackable credentials and coaching necessary to support development of early educators
    - Establish and maintain cross-agency early childhood data analytics system
- Be fully implemented by July 1, 2022

### 2) Creation of an Early Childhood Innovation Fund that will:

- Facilitate regional public-private collaborative programs and evidence-based practices that support a regional early care and education system designed to deliver measurable school readiness outcomes and meet regional workforce needs
- Incentivize coordination among public and private programs
- Build local/regional capacity and expertise in fully utilizing and leveraging all available funding streams
- Funds shall be allocated through a RFP process administered by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. Grants shall be awarded by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation in consultation with the Virginia Department of Education and the regional Growth & Opportunity Virginia Boards.

Informing the Early Childhood Success Act are the following principles:

- Reach all children and families, as early as possible, with needed services and supports
- Value parents as decision makers and provide a variety of high-quality service delivery options
- Emphasize efficiency, facilitate navigation for usage and administration, and transparency
- Ensure accountability, informed by data, evaluation and continuous quality improvement
- Empower flexible, community-driven approaches to school readiness
- Ensure stability and continuity of services along continuum from prenatal to elementary school
- Ensure equitable access to affordable services for families and children across all ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and ability statuses as well as geographic regions
- Reflect the strengths, needs, values, languages, and cultures of Virginia's children and families
- Promote financing that is adequate, equitable, and sustainable; incentivize quality and performance of early childhood programs
- Build and sustain a diverse, competent, well-compensated, and professionally supported workforce