



November 26, 2010

State Representative Gary Aubuchon  
Chairman, Lee County Legislative Delegation  
3501 Del Prado Boulevard, Suite 305  
Cape Coral, Florida 33904

Dear Representative Aubuchon,

On behalf of the Children's Movement of Florida, I am requesting to be placed on the agenda for the Lee County Legislative Delegation hearing on Wednesday, December 15, 2010.

We will address children's issues, including:

1. Access to quality health care
2. Screening and treatment for special needs
3. Genuine quality pre-kindergarten opportunities
4. High quality mentoring programs
5. Real support and information for parents

My contact information is:

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Enclosed are 20 copies of the materials that we would like to have distributed to the legislative delegation members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Becky Newell".

Becky Newell  
Coordinator, West Florida  
Children's Movement of Florida



## Children's Movement of Florida 2011 Agenda

### *Parent Skill-Building*

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Parents play the most central and formative role in children's lives. The importance of loving, responsive and caring adults in the lives of children is central to children's healthy development. But parenting also can be stressful, frustrating and confusing. All parents have questions and concerns about their children, but not everyone has trusted sources for the answers they need. Further, given the explosion over the last 20 years in new research and insights into child development, all parents can benefit from information and support while raising their children. In Florida, however, parents often do not know where to find information. This can be changed by making information available statewide.

- **Implement a public awareness campaign and provide information to families** on the importance of early development, nurturing parenting and parental involvement; provide and publicize a statewide phone line and website in at least three languages (English, Spanish, Creole); upon parent's request, provide information on their child's development regularly by text and email: \$10 million.

### *Mentoring*

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Mentoring programs connect children with caring adults and create the structure for a nurturing relationship. Florida once was the national leader in mentoring, creating more than 200,000 relationships through the Governor's Mentoring Initiative launched in 1999 by Gov. Jeb Bush, which was embraced widely throughout the state by the public and private sectors. Unfortunately, funding for mentoring has decreased recently, and mentoring no longer seems a high priority for Florida's top elected leaders. Florida can begin to regain its leadership on mentoring through these modest steps:

- **Require the Florida Mentoring Partnership to update and reactivate the strategies that made Florida the national leader on mentoring:** \$100,000.
- **Reallocate** the \$4 million appropriated during the 2010 legislative session for mentoring through DOE to be overseen by the Florida Mentoring Partnership for research-based mentoring initiatives and assessment on mentoring programs.
- **Identify and collect common mentoring data statewide to inform planning and capacity, and measure impact of mentoring through DOE:** Cost: NA.
- **Require longitudinal research by a third-party evaluator** of Florida's key mentoring programs: \$80,000.

### *Developmental Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment for Children with Special Needs*

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Many children have special needs, temporarily or throughout their lives. Others at risk can avoid permanent disability if helped early. Information and support – online, by phone and in the community – can help parents guide children through these challenges and find peace of mind. Unfortunately, many parents who notice something might be wrong with their child do not know how or where to find help. If we put knowledge at parents' fingertips, they can assess their children and obtain helpful information if there's reason to be concerned:

- **Provide on-line screening and referral tools for families:** Through statewide campaign (above), provide screening tools for parents and referral resources via on-line, telephone and community portals: \$25.5 million.
- **Conduct an** inventory of currently available treatment programs for children with special needs and develop statewide implementation plan to ensure timely screening, diagnosis and treatment for them: \$500,000.

### *Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK)*

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In November 2002, Florida's voters passed a constitutional amendment to offer free, voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) programs to every 4 year old in the state. More than 160,000 4 year olds, or about 69 percent of the eligible population, now participate in this program, costing the state \$366 million annually. Florida started the statewide program with a tight timetable and limited budget, resulting in the state meeting only three of 10 nationally recommended standards and ranking 34th among 38 states in per pupil funding. While Florida has a solid foundation, enhancements to the current model would help Florida more fully deliver on the promise of a high-quality preschool education. The current standards and per pupil reimbursement are inadequate to deliver high-quality programs, as originally promised. Florida can significantly improve its VPK program in 2010 by taking the steps outlined below:

- **Provide higher per pupil funding for VPK programs so that more qualified teachers can be hired:** \$13.5 million.
- **Fund a process that will produce more highly qualified lead teachers in all VPK classrooms through scholarships and the expansion of degree programs statewide:** \$22 million.
- **Implement research-based curriculum** in all VPK classrooms and provide materials and support for implementation: \$47.3 million.
- **Improve the accountability system:** Mandate pre- and post-assessment of children; observe teachers to inform personal professional development plans: \$6.4 million.

### *Health Care*

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Florida has the nation's second-highest percentage of uninsured children, and one recent report places our state atop that list. More than 12 percent of our children – at least 548,000 of Florida's youngest, most vulnerable citizens – do not have health insurance. Children without health insurance do not receive adequate care, do not seek prompt treatment when they are ill, and when they enter a hospital in Florida, they are 1.5 times as likely to die there as are insured children. Florida can provide health insurance to more than half of all uninsured children through outreach and a modest investment:

- **Outreach to eligible families to access KidCare, including targeted enrollment efforts in schools:** \$6 million.
- **Increase number of children with health insurance: Provide more than 300,000 children with health insurance:** \$176.8 million (new federal funds generated: \$271 million)