Resolution No.: 16-664
Introduced: July 15, 2008
Adopted: July 22, 2008

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Councilmember Ervin

Subject: Establishment of the Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group

Background

1. High-quality early childhood education has been demonstrated to positively affect children's early development and later academic achievement; to be a cost effective method for improving student life opportunities; and to reduce crime and reliance on public assistance.

2. For several years, the County Council has explored how to increase participation in early childhood education programs, especially for four-year old children in families with low-income and other challenges such as special needs or limited English proficiency. The Council has increased investment in early childhood programs that meet the diverse needs of County families.

3. Other recent efforts by early childhood stakeholder groups, including the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Congress, the Montgomery County Leadership in Action Program, and the Higher Education Initiative in Early Childhood/Child Care, have explored how to improve access to quality early childhood education, how to develop a system of early childhood services, and how to assure that all County children will enter school fully ready to learn.

4. In 2006, the General Assembly established a Task Force on Universal Preschool Education. The Task Force issued a report in December 2007 with recommendations on how to increase access to voluntary, free, and high-quality preschool services for all four-year olds regardless of family income. Recommendations were categorized under six goals: (1) Overall Plan to Increase Access to Early Childhood Education; (2) Indicators of Program Quality; (3) Professional Development of Early Childhood Staff; (4) Implementation Plan to Engage Business Community and General Public; (5) Conceptual Framework for Universal Preschool Program; and (6) Program Evaluation Methods.

5. On March 11, 2008, the County Board of Education adopted a resolution expressing its commitment to collaboration with early childhood stakeholders to develop a countywide universal preschool implementation plan.

6. The Health and Human Services and Education Committees held a worksession on March 31, 2008 and received a briefing from the Maryland State Department of Education on the recommendations of the Task Force. Members of the Committees expressed interest in assessing the number of four-year olds in the County, generating cost estimates for running a universal pre-kindergarten program in the County, and exploring State support for pilot universal preschool programs.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The Council will appoint a Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group.

2. The Work Group must consist of 13 to 15 members and include at least one but no more than two representatives from Montgomery County Public Schools; at least one but no more than two parents; and one representative from each of the following organizations: the County Department of Health and Human Services, County Commission on Childcare, Collaboration Council, County chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland State Teachers Association, Montgomery College, Universities at Shady Grove, County Chamber of Commerce, Organization of Child Care Directors, Family Child Care Association of Montgomery County, and Service Employees International Union.

3. The Work Group must develop a countywide universal preschool implementation plan, including recommendations to develop a high-quality preschool, early care, and education program for all County four-year olds.

4. The Work Group must submit a report to the Council that specifies recommended action steps and documents the need for services.

5. The Work Group must build on the reports and recommendations developed by the Montgomery County Leadership in Action Program and the Higher Education Initiative in Early Childhood/Child Care.

6. The report must address the MSDE Early Childhood Strategic Plan and each goal and recommendation described in the State Task Force Report on Universal Preschool Education.

7. The report must assess: (1) the population of four-year old children who would qualify for services; (2) existing public and nonpublic programs serving the four-year old population; (3) all preschool program costs and all available funding streams that may be used to support the program; (4) standards and process to determine the quality of preschool programs; (5) how and to what extent the capacity of existing high-quality providers can be expanded; (6) how informal programs that families use can improve the quality of their services; (7) what is required for professional development and compensation to assure an adequate and qualified workforce; and (8) strategies to educate and engage businesses and community members.

8. The Work Group must submit its first report by December 15, 2008, in time to influence State planning and budget deliberations for FY10. This initial report must recommend a structural framework and estimate the cost to implement universal preschool in response to goals one, two, and five of the State Task Force report.

9. The Work Group must submit its final report by March 1, 2009.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council