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TO: Board of Education  
FROM: Dale Ellis  
DATE: March 5, 2012  
SUBJ: INFORMATION ITEM (Draft Pre-K Legislation)

Enclosed is a draft of possible Pre-K legislation. As you can see from the enclosure, there was some change in the language due to a public uproar over the original recommendations, which stated that Pre-K would be conducted solely in private daycare centers beginning in 2013-2014. While a change was made, I do not think this discussion is going to go away. I will discuss this in detail at the meeting as far as possible impacts on Montgomery County Schools.

I will be available to answer any questions you may have.

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## COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based on information presented to the House Select Committee on Early Childhood Education Improvement and pursuant discussion among members during their regularly scheduled meetings, the Committee makes the following findings and recommendations to the 2012 Regular Session of the 2011 General Assembly:

### 1. Continue funding and monitoring of early childhood programs in North Carolina

The Committee finds that high quality early childhood programs yield cost-beneficial positive outcomes for children. It is therefore the intent of the Committee that continued funding is provided for State-funded early childhood programs in North Carolina to meet the needs of a growing population and an increasing number of children living in poverty. The Committee also recommends that child learning outcomes be continuously monitored and reported to the General Assembly to ensure optimal outcomes and investment returns.

### 2. Establish eligibility criteria for the NC Pre-K program

The Committee finds that a substantial body of longitudinal research indicates positive learning outcomes from the provision of high-quality early childhood education programs to children whose families live in poverty. These studies indicate, and the Committee finds, the most significant effects appear to be with children from more adverse conditions. The Committee finds that there are an increasing number of children living in extreme poverty, with over 30,000 four year olds living in families whose income is at or below 100% of federal poverty guidelines. The Committee also finds that consistency of use of eligibility criteria with other prekindergarten programs, such as Head Start, will lessen confusion and increase participation of children with the greatest needs in the NC Pre-K program. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly establish eligibility criteria for the NC Pre-K program to target children with the greatest needs.

### 3. Increase participation in the NC Pre-K program by private child care providers

The Committee finds that private child care facilities have the capacity to provide high quality NC Pre-K classrooms where as local schools, in some instances, are over- crowded and have limited capacity. Therefore, the Committee recommends that:

- ~~NC Pre-K classrooms be located in private child care facilities, with exceptions made by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). These exceptions should be made to meet program capacity and quality needs at the local level, and ensure maintenance of parental choice, accessibility, and use of federal dollars.~~ Replace will Gill language
- DCDEE, working collaboratively with the NC Partnership for Children (NCPC), establish NC Pre-K rates based on provider cost data to implement the program at the level of quality as established by the General Assembly. DCDEE and NCPC shall study alternative payment structures for NC Pre-K classrooms that will maximize the number of children served. One consideration shall be setting reimbursement rates on a per classroom basis. The study shall identify benefits of contracting for entire classrooms in lieu of individual student rates and determine whether additional children may be served by this method. The study results shall be reported to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services by December 1, 2012.

- DCDEE establish a standard decision-making process to be used by local NC Pre-K committees for awarding NC Pre-K slots. This decision-making process shall be transparent and allow for community and parental input regarding who should administer the program, and where classrooms shall be placed.
- Licensed child care providers be offered multiple-year contracts for NC Pre-K classroom implementation.

#### **4. Develop the capability to assess and follow child development and progress across agencies**

The Committee finds that in order to continuously improve the quality of early care and education in this State and resulting outcomes for children and families, that successful outcomes and support needs should be determined at program, classroom, and child levels. The Committee therefore recommends that State agencies involved in the provision of programs and services to children ages birth to five work collaboratively with the Department of Public Instruction to build upon the K-12 data base system. In order to accomplish this goal, agencies involved in the provision of services and supports to young children and their families, such as the Child Care Subsidy program, should develop a confidential, unique identifier for children receiving these supports, as well as child outcome measures which can be linked to programs, classrooms, and services. The collaborative assessment and data base system should be able to track child progress for children receiving State assistance from infancy through high school completion.

#### **5. Increase prekindergarten teacher quality related to early language and literacy development**

The Committee finds that early language and development from birth-to-five provides an essential foundation for future academic success. In order to ensure optimal early language and literacy development, the Committee recommends that prekindergarten teachers obtain a Birth-Kindergarten teacher license and that licensure approval, in part, be based on demonstration of competencies in early language and literacy instruction, especially in the areas of oral language, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print concepts.

Representative Gill recommends deleting the first bullet under Recommendation #3 on page 15 of the report and inserting the following:

"NC Pre-k classrooms be located in a <sup>diverse</sup> array of settings, including for-profit, not-for-profit, faith-based, Head Start, or public school classrooms. Site location shall be based on local capacity, quality and <sup>assurance</sup> ~~insurance~~ of parental choice and accessibility ~~of~~ use of federal dollars."