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**Date:** 2/1/2016 4:38:42 PM

**Subject:** Re: First Steps Meeting - Thursday, January 28, 2016 at 9:00 a.m.

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I couldn't have said it better. Thank you, Shannon!

Garry

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 1, 2016, at 12:15 PM, Shannon Erickson <repshannonerickson@gmail.com> wrote:

All,

Thank you for your time yesterday on the vital issue of South Carolina's youngest citizens. I came away with some concerns and very mixed feelings due to some of the comments made regarding the group and its future plans/meetings.

I hope that we can keep the dialogue open and continue to work together on this important issue.

I think it important to point out that Governor Haley's other education reforms are being strongly embraced and are most needed given the Equity Funding Lawsuit work that we need to accomplish. Many of us appreciate her leadership there and are completely committed to making those plans a reality, sooner, rather than later.

The overhaul/modernization/revamp/re-assignment of First Steps and its parts and parcels is not in the same category of urgency or need, however. These services already exist and are working in these plaintiff districts and if the Governor wishes to reform this area, I hope that she will be open to a different time table for this portion of her agenda.

In my lowly opinion, the work/reform in this area needs to move more slowly, with a more collaborative and deliberate assessment, discernment, discussion and planning with all involved.

I know from my work in this field and from communication from providers of these services that the private sector of the early care and education does not feel engaged or appreciated in the discussion at this point. The "private sector" encompasses the faith-based, non-profits and for-profit child development centers, CDEP in some districts, and many wrap-around services for all ages of children across the state and serve thousands of children from infancy through elementary school. I know that they depend heavily on the First Steps state office, county partnership offices and BabyNet staff because of the various statewide and community-based technical assistance, professional development and service coordination in this multi-faceted field of work with our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

To my knowledge, no one from the SCAECE which represents all licensed child care providers in our state has been asked to comment or attend any meetings on this issue and I am afraid that there is growing concern that the Governor does not care what happens to the private sector, or eventually, the 0-3 population of children who rely on them for care in a necessary "birth to four business model" to adequately provide affordable, high-quality early education and care. The SCAECE, the Christian schools association and others have maintained one unwavering point throughout the many years of public/private partnership collaboration, inception, implementation and work - to remain separate from State Department of Education involvement, oversight or management since that would completely remove the private from the partnership and SDE would be the convener and oversee all of these programs involved in CDEP.

Given that the General Assembly's overhaul of First Steps based on the most recent LAC report on First Steps, reconstituted the board, partnerships, accountability system, etc. and all of those changes have just recently been fully implemented, and given that there is new leadership both in the director's office and on the board, I also feel that it is premature to push for drastic change without at least seeing what these new faces, skills and structural changes will accomplish.

No one wants to continue anything that is not working or harmful but from my vantage point; the proposals outlined in the Governor's reforms regarding First Steps are using a sledge hammer instead of a scalpel. From other work she has done, I know that she would not mean to send that message or to make the small business community, which includes these private early education and care providers across our state, feel unappreciated or worried about the longevity of their businesses, the care they provide for the children of so much of SC's workforce and the employees they have within who count on those jobs to support their families. It also endangers the only codified school choice with public/private services in our state.

The ripples from change in these areas could quite frankly be devastating to a large sector of our state. Right now, with the unlevel regulatory situation between the various early care and education providers across the state, the ability to provide high quality, affordable services is already a challenge, as Governor Haley knows since she championed a regulatory level-playing field during 2007 while she served in the General Assembly. Although that is still an on-going issue, she took time as a small business advocate, a mom and lawmaker to see the issues families, care providers and agencies struggle with every day. To already have any early care and education program operating less than four hours a day have absolutely no oversight, health & safety regulation - not even back ground checks - required, and other care providers operating for more than 4 hours have hundreds of regulations, and potentially 6 groups/agencies overseeing them is enough of a burden. This industry has a multi-million dollar economic impact on our state, is already operating at a disadvantage, even paying school operating taxes at some of the highest rates only to see those taxes used in public schools to pull the four-year-olds away and into "free" programs quite often.

South Carolina works so hard to be a business friendly state and SC First Steps is an agency that understands this and has been tasked with the oversight and accountability of and to those small businesses that are approved to be part of a most necessary public/private system that is being modeled across the nation. We should be celebrating our successes, especially that the children are succeeding - CDEP students now in 6th grade compared to their counterparts who did not have CDEP have a 43% achievement gap reduction - and students in the public and private programs are performing equally as well with the private sector outpacing the public by providing the same programming at 25% less cost to the SC taxpayers, but we want to beat up the organization spearheading those results?

I do not believe it is the goal of our state to have all children from birth onward in the care of only our public schools and agencies, with that in mind, I caution that any change in the alignment of services, oversight, and allocation of duties could be catastrophic. I would humbly request slow, measured care, inclusion, and deliberate consideration of all of those factors and the vital role First Steps plays in all of those areas as we move forward. I offer any help or resource I can to help this occur.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Shannon

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On Wed, Jan 27, 2016 at 10:41 AM, Mottel, Haley <[HaleyMottel@gov.sc.gov](mailto:HaleyMottel@gov.sc.gov)> wrote:

Good morning,

We look forward to seeing you tomorrow for the meeting to discuss First Steps. The meeting will be held on the first floor of the Wade Hampton Building, Room 106 in the Governor's Conference Room. Please let us know if you need anything.

Thank you,

Haley

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**From:** Mottel, Haley  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2016 1:55 PM  
**To:** Mottel, Haley  
**Cc:** Veldran, Katherine; Baker, Josh; Patel, Swati  
**Subject:** First Steps Meeting - Thursday, January 28, 2016 at 9:00 a.m

Good afternoon,

The Governor's office would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss the Governor's First Steps restructuring plan next Thursday, January 28, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. We would like to have a discussion about the plan and to address any questions or concerns you may have. The meeting will be held on the first floor of the Wade Hampton Building, Room 106 in the

Governor's Conference Room. Please let me know if you are able to attend by Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you,

Haley

Haley Mottel

Legislative Liaison

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