

Comments for First Steps Board Retreat
By: Senator Mike Fair

First Steps is an amazing organization and I am grateful to the Governor for appointing me to serve. Initially, I had reservations about moving into this territory, but my concerns were without merit. Mandatory universal 4k was not a possibility then and is not a possibility now.

It is too expensive, counterproductive and is a prescription that SC would not embrace. First Steps serves at the pleasure of the Governor and the General Assembly and neither the Governor nor the GA wanted to go in the direction of Mandatory 4k.

Stay at home mothers will always be a child's best teacher. Yet, many moms must work outside the home. My wife, for example, could not 'stay at home' and our child went to a very fine center in our neighborhood where she learned and took naps each day at noon.

Many if not most families today also look forward to placing their preschool children in a quality learning environment. There is a role for private and public pre-school care.

So, I think First Steps is entering a phase in which we will be facing our biggest challenge and our 'finest hour.'

I believe that First Steps is the preeminent organization serving children in the Palmetto State.

I say that for several reasons.

1. First Steps has led the way in securing new partners from the business and private sector foundations and our partners both local and national are stronger than ever.

The nurse Family Partnership funded by a private foundation is but one example.

2. Our Former Chairman, Lewis Smoak, was adamant about our role to reach the neediest and that has been our focus and I believe should continue to be our Focus. We will certainly miss Lewis and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to First Steps.

3. We have a new Chairman whom I have known for at least 20 years and know him to also have a 'servants heart.' Ken has strong ties to both private and public sectors. So I welcome our new Chair, Ken Wingate, with great enthusiasm about his capabilities to lead and we can say with assurance that First Steps is positioned to provide our kids with their finest hour as well.

4. As we serve our youngest children, our encounter with them comes at a critical time in their lives which offers us a wonderful opportunity. We have the opportunity to teach

principles of character that other educational entities seem not to have. We must not allow that opportunity to slip past us at the state and local levels.

5. First Steps understands that we do not ever stand in the place of the child's family. Rather we assist the family to help the child achieve what the family wants for them...the beginnings of a good education in a safe place.

Senator Fair would also like to welcome the new state trustees and thank them and the local partners for the sacrifices they make each and every day for SC's children.

We must do our part to equip our kids with the educational and moral basics in partnership with their families. That foundation properly built will serve them not just for k-12 but will serve them for their entire lives.