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**Subject:** FW: clarification & bill update

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FYI, I thought you might want to see this. This was sent out by the Chesterfield County First Steps board chair, Tony Nolan, after a call Susan and Joe Waters held with all of the local FS Executive Directors on Monday.

Please don't forward as I did not ask permission to pass this on.

Hopefully we can catch up soon. L

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Good morning fellow ED's. My board chairman Tony Nolan asked me to send the following message to each of you. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

I trust you will find the following factual narrative informative, enlightening and useful. It is intended to clarify a very positive and beneficial initiative that was mischaracterized by Susan Devenney and Joe Waters during the First Steps conference call of Monday, March 11 and to accurately report the results of that initiative.

On Wednesday, March 13, the Senate Education Committee adopted an amendment proposed by Senator Gerald Malloy of Darlington and co-sponsored by Senator Vincent Sheheen of Camden that eliminated the 60/40 base allocation distribution provision from the intended legislation.

A version of the adopted amendment, developed after numerous conversations with other partnerships, legislators and stakeholders, was originally offered by me to the Senate Education K-12 Subcommittee on March 6 with only one intention – to make the bill better. The 60/40 distribution provision was disproportionately discriminatory against the rural, less funded partnerships. This ill-considered provision sought to make 40% of a County Partnership's base funding conditional on subjectively weighted factors that are already basic requirements for initial grant approval. Why should scarce resources intended to help get our state's most vulnerable children ready for school be distributed based on a subjectively evaluated competition rather than demonstrated need and performance measures? They shouldn't.

This proposed funding change provided no measurable benefit to the children served by the County Partnerships. The Senate Education committee overwhelmingly agreed that this is a better bill without the 60/40 provision. Only one committee member voted against the amendment which bases the partnerships' state allocation on demonstrated need and performance measures.

Chesterfield County First Steps (CCFS) felt strongly enough about the potential harm of the 60/40 language that our executive director and I decided in early February to work within the legislature to get the bill changed. You will recall that the partnerships were told that after the bill went to the legislature it

was out of the hands of the state office. CCFS's efforts were supported by numerous partnerships (they can identify themselves if they wish – CCFS speaks for no other partnership) and encouraged by members of our legislative delegation. No legislators ever even slightly indicated that we would endanger the bill by seeking to change it. They welcomed our participation saying they wanted the best bill possible for First Steps.

Nothing that CCFS Executive Director Karen Odom and I initiated, communicated or influenced ever endangered the First Steps reauthorization bill, as was insinuated by Susan and Joe Waters during the ED's conference call on Monday, March 11. In fact, Ms. Odom was thanked for her contributions to making this bill better by three members of the Senate Education Committee during the meeting at which the amendment correcting the misguided funding change was adopted.

As CCFS board chair, I am very proud of the accomplishment of Ms. Odom and the ED's who worked with her through the legislative process (which is the right of every South Carolina citizen, yet which Susan and Joe Waters implied was somehow devious) to make the First Steps reauthorization bill better.

These are simply the facts of how this bill was improved. These facts clearly demonstrate that our legislators and the business community realize that the real work of First Steps is done by the County Partnerships and that they regard your work and your opinion highly.

For the sake of full disclosure, I will also add that the amendment does create a separate, unfunded grant program that, if ever funded, can use weighted factors to distribute additional funds to the partnerships.

The bill itself was carried over (held in committee) by Senator Cleary of Georgetown, who also voted in favor of the amendment, to wait on the Legislative Audit Council (LAC) report.

Respectfully,

Tony Nolan  
Chairman  
Chesterfield County First Steps