

From:
To:
Date:
Subject: FW: First Steps misinformation in Exec Budget

Shannon,

It was great to see you last night. Again, we appreciate your email about First Steps. We would welcome a meeting with you and Mrs. Rita to discuss your comments.

We will be able to show you exactly where we pulled all of the information to address your concerns about “her background information inaccuracies and overall negative tone.”

Are you able to meet with us on Tuesday, 1/22 at 11:30 a.m.?

Thank you,
Katherine

Katherine F. Veldran
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From: Shannon Erickson [mailto:repshannonerickson@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2013 7:46 AM

To: Veldran, Katherine

Cc: Rita Allison

Subject: First Steps misinformation in Exec Budget

Hi Katherine,

I am making my way through Gov. Haley's Executive Budget and am concerned with a section. It does not involve the particular \$'s but rather her background information inaccuracies and overall negative tone.

"Fixing First Steps

The Legislative Audit Council's (LAC) recent report on BabyNet was unflattering in many respects, especially where it addressed budgetary controls and oversight, assessment of provider quality, and progress towards federally-required performance targets. The report that the LAC is expected to release on First Steps in February 2013 may well have a similar tone.

For too long, First Steps has failed to address the basics – it is a program responsible for making children ready for school, but it still lacks a definition for “school readiness.” There are also significant concerns about the efficacy of the program's service offerings, some of which have not been validated by peer-reviewed publications as being effective.

The Executive Budget reflects continued support for this program at the current year level, but this should not be construed as an endorsement of the status quo. The Administration looks forward to reviewing and reflecting upon the LAC's report early in 2013 and will make more specific recommendations as to how these services should be delivered, and by whom, in the wake of that audit."

The portion regarding the BabyNet LAC report is not correct. I requested the audit right after Governor Sanford moved BabyNet from DHEC to First Steps. Its purpose was to define clearly from an outside entity what areas First Steps should make certain to change. The information about poor practices were regarding DHEC operations of that program, not First Steps, and were in fact changed by First Steps to provide better accounting and oversight.

Regarding her comment about Reauthorization and "no definition" of readiness- again, this is not correct. First Steps has been operating with a firm definition of readiness but until this years Reauthorization, it had not been written into the enabling legislation. Because other agencies and groups vary on that definition, First Steps, its board and outside stakeholders felt that as the state's readiness office, it should clearly- in statute- define readiness.

As for her assumption that the new LAC audit will be negative, I do not believe that at this point there is basis for that conclusion. However, if that is what the Governor believes, I would invite her, as First Steps Board Chair, to come speak with the board, the Reauthorization team and involved stakeholders to discuss this.

To my knowledge, Governor Haley has not attended a First Steps meeting nor sent its Board any directives as its head. I am certain that the appointed members and staff would very much appreciate a dialogue with her.

If I can help with further information regarding the transition of BabyNet, First Steps Private/Public 4K Voucher/Choice program or the Reauthorization process or document, please let me know. First Steps has evolved over the years from input from the Governor's office, the General Assembly, public hearings, best practice research & data updates and will continue to plan, respond & implement directives in order to improve and keep the focus on South Carolina's children.

Again, I am available to assist in this communication in any way possible since misinformation could negatively impact her office and the progress made with readiness in our state.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to further discussion on this with you and Governor Haley.

Shannon

Sent from Shannon Erickson's iPhone