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Governor Nikki R. Haley
State of South Carolina
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

Betty and I look forward to joining you and your other guests at the mansion this evening.

Please consider four important facts as you evaluate First Steps' reauthorization legislation being filed today or tomorrow.

1. Retention in first grade is down 48% from 2001 to 2010.
2. Our budget is right at \$17.9 million in state dollars, and the 1,952 children not repeating first grade avoids \$21 million in first grade repeat schooling costs.

Improving Parenting Skills

Approximately 37% of our budget has been and is spent on improving parenting skills. This quote from Scott Hippert, CEO of the National Office of Parents as Teachers, is instructive:

Under First Steps leadership, parents as Teachers in South Carolina, has set the national example in fidelity and accountability. We hold you up to other states doing home visitation as an example of how it can be done right.

We've conducted 532,007 home visits since 2001 and outside evaluators determined that 66% of the families visited significantly "increased their [parenting] skills to high quality."

Child care Quality

Approximately 35% of our budget is spent on improving child care centers across the state, with 58,088 child care staff members attending training between 2001 and 2012.

Universally, child care centers ... who participated in First Steps Quality Enhancement strategies showed significant increases in pre/post scores of assessed child care quality.

*High Scope Educational Research Foundation
2009 Evaluation*

Governor, this small agency which you chair and I vice-chair at your pleasure can now identify children with at-risk factors in each of our counties. First Steps is the local facilitator to connect the neediest children with state, local, church, private, and philanthropic services which meets the need of the individual child. The results are already astounding. Because of what we have now learned over 14 years of doing this work and the computer-driven data now available, we believe the last 2,000 children in South Carolina not performing in the first grade can be further reduced to under 1,000 in the next six years.

We look forward to discussing First Steps with you.

Most sincerely,



Lewis T. Smoak

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