



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Historic News Out of Tallahassee Relating to the Advancement of Early Education in the State of Florida

TAMPA, FL (Friday, February 4, 2022) – The Early Learning Coalitions of Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota

The State of Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) is proven to prepare children for kindergarten and a more successful transition into elementary school. The leadership in the Florida Senate and the Senate Appropriations Committee have made a historic addition to their proposed appropriations budget to allocate an additional \$392 million over the next three years to the VPK education program which would further enhance the kindergarten readiness rate of our State's youngest citizens. This appropriation would enable an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for VPK from \$2486 to \$3294 by adding \$808 in a supplemental payment to fund wage increases. This will allow for higher VPK teacher pay and program enhancement, as well as compliance with the new VPK standards which were enacted in HB 419 by the Florida Legislature last year.

Since the inception of the VPK program in 2005, the BSA has remained at about \$2500 per child, with annual spending of about \$400 million on the program. This proposed new funding would increase the annual level of spending on the VPK program by slightly over \$130 million/year over the next three years.

The Early Learning Coalitions in West Central Florida (Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, Pasco/Hernando, Polk, and Sarasota) serve a substantial proportion of all 4 year-olds in the State and would like to express their appreciation to Senate President Wilton Simpson, Senate Appropriations Chair Kelli Stargel, Appropriation Committee Member on Education Kathleen Passidomo and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, and Chair Doug Broxson for their leadership in making this historic and game changing proposal

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