

ERIN HANNIGAN
District 1, Vice-Chair (707) 553-5363
MONICA BROWN
District 2, (707) 784-3031
WANDA WILLIAMS
District 3, (707) 784-6136
JOHN M. VASQUEZ
District 4, (707) 784-6129
MITCH MASHBURN
District 5, Chair (707) 784-6030

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



BILL EMLIN
County Administrator
(707) 784-6100

675 Texas Street, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533-6342
Fax (707) 784-6665

www.solanocounty.com

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-12
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: SUPPORT, Congressional Earmark Request for the Vallejo Early Learning Center

Dear Senator Butler:

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express my strong support for funding through a Congressional Earmark for the Vallejo Early Learning Center, in the amount of \$3,000,000. This is a multi-partner project; the First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission (First 5 Solano), in partnership with Child Start (local Head Start/Early Head Start provider), the Solano County Office of Education, and private child care and early learning providers, is requesting this funding to renovate a shuttered elementary school in Vallejo to convert it to an Early Learning Center (ELC). The funds will be used for renovations needed to convert the facility to an age-appropriate site for early learning and establish a Community Resource Center onsite. The cost of the renovation is \$19.8 Million. This is an important economic development and revitalization project as this shuttered school site is in a challenged and underserved residential neighborhood.

In Solano County, the primary barrier to expanding childcare is the lack of physical locations to provide early childhood education and childcare services. Providers struggle to find suitable buildings, and family childcare homes have a difficult time expanding to a Center Based facility. Only one out of four children in Solano County who need a childcare slot have access to a licensed slot, and less than half of 3- to 4-year-olds have a preschool experience. This new facility will provide a variety of early care and education opportunities for infants through preschoolers, with a total capacity of over to 200 slots. The Community Resource Center will host a Family Resource Center operated by Fighting Back Partnership, a Food Pantry designed as a local Bodega, and Health and Social Service supports, all located on the grounds of the ELC.

This innovative approach to meeting a critical community need by repurposing an old school facility will be the first of its kind in California and will serve as a model for other communities where lack of childcare facilities is a barrier to early childhood learning expansion, and where there are surplus school sites. Investment in this project has the potential to impact outcomes for the most under-resourced families for at least 2 decades, laying a strong foundation for positive outcomes in their lives and for the greater community.

First 5 Solano, Child Start, the Solano County Office of Education, along with our community partners, have a history of successful collaborative work to support children and families. We know that childcare and early learning exposure, experiences, and opportunities are vital for healthy child development and getting children ready for school. Investment in this project has the potential to impact outcomes for the most under-resourced families for at least 2 decades, laying a foundation to positively change

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the trajectory of a child's academic career and future. This is an important economic development project and is essential to support a healthy California economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitch N. Mashburn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mitch Mashburn, Chair

Solano County Board of Supervisors

CC:

The Honorable Alex Padilla, United States Senator

The Honorable John Garamendi, United States Representative

The Honorable Mike Thompson, United States Representative

The Honorable Bill Dodd, California State Senator

The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, California State Assemblymember

Michele Harris, Executive Director, First 5 Solano

Paragon Government Relations

Karen Lange, SYASL Partners, Inc.