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Business Leaders Explore Economics of Early Childhood and the Connection to Future Workforce

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The Virginia Chamber Foundation and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) hosted an invitation-only luncheon and executive briefing for statewide business leaders on “The Economics of Early Childhood: Smart Beginnings for Virginia’s Workforce Pipeline.” The event, held Tuesday, Oct. 15 at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, strengthened the growing recognition from Virginia’s business community that a strong educational start for children is linked to a stable, talented future workforce and that early childhood education is a critical support for today’s workforce.

Guest speakers for the Oct. 15 event were:

- Richard Bynum is President of PNC Bank’s Greater Washington and Virginia region. He shared insights on why greater investment in early childhood education means greater opportunity for Virginia’s children. PNC has been a leader in advocating for quality early childhood education for 15 years through PNC Grow Up Great, the company’s \$500 million initiative focused on preparing children from birth to age five for success in school and in
- Stephen Moret is President and CEO for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. He explained that early childhood development and school readiness form the foundation of the Commonwealth’s long-term vision for workforce development and economic

The 6th annual executive briefing, which drew 150 business, education, and legislative leaders from across the Commonwealth, was designed to reinforce the business case for supporting Virginia’s youngest citizens in the early years so they will start school healthy and ready to learn.

Both of the sponsoring organizations are committed to advancing quality early learning initiatives in the state:

- Blueprint Virginia 2025, presented in December 2017 and coordinated by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, is a comprehensive strategic plan to provide business leadership, direction and long-range economic development planning for Virginia. In Blueprint Virginia 2025, one of the key recommendations to strengthen the Commonwealth’s position as a leader in the global economy is building a strong foundation from the beginning through early childhood
- The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and its statewide Smart Beginnings initiatives are focused on ensuring that communities across Virginia have capacity to support the good health and school readiness of young

“Virginia was recently named America’s Top State for Business in CNBC’s 13th annual study, which recognized our world-class workforce and high-performing education system,” said Barry DuVal, President & CEO of the Virginia Chamber. “In order for Virginia to compete on the national and global stage, especially in high-tech fields, the business community must be involved in building a strong and talented workforce from the very beginning.”

“VECF and the Virginia Chamber are proud to partner on forward-thinking and innovative initiatives that engage the business community in the important work of school readiness,” said Ned W. Masee, board chair of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and President of Croatan Advisors. “These Executive Briefings provide an opportunity for deeper insights and collaboration on strategies to deliver a strong start for all young children – an imperative for Virginia’s future prosperity.”