



Business Executives Gain Insights on Private Sector Innovations to Strengthen Early Childhood Care and Education Services in Virginia

Richmond, VA (Oct. 31, 2024) – The Virginia Chamber Foundation and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) hosted an Executive Briefing on “The Economics of Early Childhood” for statewide business, economic development, education and legislative leaders.

The 11th annual Executive Briefing on Oct. 31, 2024, which drew approximately 150 attendees from across the Commonwealth, provided an opportunity to reinforce that a strong early childhood care and education (ECCE) system in Virginia is not only linked to a stable, talented future workforce but is essential to a robust current workforce and economy.

Jason El Koubi, President & CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, delivered a keynote address highlighting the power and necessity of collaboration among statewide employers, economic developers, local/regional partners, workforce/higher education institutions, and philanthropy. He co-chairs the Shovel Ready Virginia Task Force established in 2024 by VECF as a complement to the Virginia Business Roundtable for Early Education (VBREE). The objectives of the task force are to make recommendations for building the supply of high-quality ECCE services as well as the capacity of the ECCE workforce.

Following the keynote, a panel of business and community leaders shared insights on private sector innovations designed to build the supply of high-quality ECCE services necessary to ensure a robust current and future workforce for Virginia. Panelists included:

- Todd Norris, SVP of Community Health & System Advancement, Ballad Health
- Chris Quinn, President & CEO of Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce
- Dr. Millard “Pete” Stith, Jr., Board Member & Fundraising Chairman of the Community Coalition of Sussex
- Richard Bynum, Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer, The PNC Financial Services Group

Richard Bynum, VECF Board Chair, moderated the panel. “It’s very exciting to see business and community leaders throughout the state working collaboratively to create a more accessible and sustainable early childhood education system that will benefit the families, children, and economy of Virginia,” Bynum said.

“Last month, CNBC named Virginia as America’s ‘Top State for Business’ for an unparalleled sixth time,” said Barry DuVal, President & CEO of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. “The Commonwealth’s public education system was rated the best in the country, and we also received high marks for having a solid infrastructure with an abundance of shovel-ready sites for companies that want to build fast and grow. Virginia has a unique opportunity to continue to build an innovative, best-in-class early childhood care and education system that can be a differentiator in economic development, site selection and talent attraction and retention.”

Noting that DuVal recently announced he will retire in early 2025 from the Virginia Chamber, Kathy Glazer, President of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, said, “We extend our sincere appreciation to Barry for his outstanding leadership and unwavering support of early

childhood care and education initiatives that have greatly impacted children, families, businesses, and communities throughout the Commonwealth. He has been a powerful voice in raising awareness that high quality, accessible child care is essential to building a robust and vibrant workforce that will ensure long term economic prosperity for Virginia.”

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: VECF is the non-partisan steward of Virginia’s promise for early childhood success, working in tandem with diverse stakeholders to ensure equitable opportunities for all families with young children to thrive. To learn more about VECF, visit www.vecf.org.

About the Virginia Chamber Foundation: The Virginia Chamber Foundation tracks Virginia’s economic competitiveness, conducts research and analysis, and hosts programs connected to the priorities of Blueprint Virginia. In December 2021, the Chamber released its new statewide strategic economic development plan, *Blueprint Virginia 2030*, which has engaged over 7,000 business, economic development, workforce, education, housing, and other community leaders to lay out a plan to ensure Virginia remains at the top of national business climate rankings. Learn more at www.blueprintvirginia.org.

Media Contact: Sara Hunt, SaraHuntPR@gmail.com, 804-994-1120