



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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Contact: Amie M. Downs
412-350-3711 (office)
412-327-3700 (cell)
amie.downs@alleghenycounty.us

Children's Fund Working Group Presents Report to County Executive

PITTSBURGH – Last week, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald was formally presented with a report from the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group for his review and consideration. It recommends the creation of a new county department dedicated to children as well as an annual investment of up to \$20 million to support high-quality early learning and out-of-school-time programs. The working group found that there are significant gaps in equitable access and recommends that a focus on improving the quality of the system would provide significant benefit to the community.

"Thank you to the members of the working group for their diligent attention to this charge. This issue is important to me and it is important to this community. Nothing could be more impactful to the residents of Allegheny County than investing in our children and their future," said Fitzgerald. "While I've just begun to dive into this report and its recommendations, it is clear that it calls for a systemic change to be dedicated to children's success. I'm grateful to the leaders of our community who gave of their time and talents to provide us with a plan to consider and will be continuing this conversation with them as we consider what options make sense for our county moving forward."

The report proposes a mission and vision for a children's fund, but also sets forth core principles including equity, access, quality and accountability. In addition to setting forth the need for a children's fund, the report set an annual goal that more children in Allegheny County can access high quality programming as well as a long-term goal of seeing systemic improvements for children in Allegheny County.

"An investment of this level is a commitment that focuses on quality and equity for youth in our community," said Trisha M. Gadson, Ph.D., Co-Chair of the Children's Fund Working Group. "It can further support the economic viability of our region."

Throughout its six months of work, the group wanted to engage as many voices, and as wide-ranging a set of voices, as possible to listen to what people had to say. This process included six public meetings, two focus groups, an online survey (in English and Spanish), and a meeting-in-a-box kit to get the input of teens. In addition to the requested report, the working group issued a Public Engagement Summary as a companion piece which outlines the input from the public on the creation of a children's fund at the county level.

"The importance of the County Executive's leadership is vital to the success of our children and our region," said Michelle Figlar, Co-Chair of the Children's Fund Working Group. "The addition of local leadership and revenue is essential to the success of early learning and out-of-school programs, and Allegheny County has the opportunity to lead in this effort."

The working group was charged with the following tasks:

- Review available data to assess the state of children and children's programming in Allegheny County;
- Gather information from providers, parents and experts across the county especially regarding:
 - the demand for programming across the county;
 - the supply of programming across the county; and,

- the gaps between the demand and supply;
- Gather input from the larger community
- Review state and federal policies and their impact on children’s programming in the county;
- Design the operations of a possible children’s fund to provide resources to early childhood learning and out-of-school time programs across the county;
- Provide concept budgets for operations with budgets of \$5 million, \$10 million and \$20 million annually;
- Provide sample allocation models and scenarios; and
- Report out findings to the County Executive.

In addition to the co-chairs, the other members of the working group are:

The Honorable Tom Baker
 Dr. Quintin Bullock
 Rosamaria Cristello
 Wanda Franklin
 Beth Heeb
 Walter Lewis
 Jesse McLean
 Robert Nelkin

Carol Barone-Martin
 Cara Ciminillo
 James Doyle
 Debbie Gallagher
 Rosanne Javorsky
 Betty Lisowski
 Rebecca Mercatoris
 Kathryn Vargas

Earl Buford
 Dave Coplan
 Colleen Fedor
 James Guffey
 Dr. Valerie Kinloch
 Sally McCrady
 Nancy Murray
 The Honorable DeWitt Walton

In November 2018, voters of Allegheny County considered the question of whether to create a children’s fund for the purposes of supporting early childhood learning and out-of-school time programs.

The full Report to the County Executive, and the companion Public Engagement Summary are available online for review at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/county-executive/initiatives.aspx>. The working group website used to provide information on the community outreach process also contains information, including a presentation given at the community meetings: <http://www.childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org/>.

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Office of County Executive Rich Fitzgerald
 101 Courthouse | 436 Grant Street | Pittsburgh, PA 15219
 Phone: 412-350-6500 | Fax: 412-350-6512
www.alleghenycounty.us

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