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Room 228 Blatt Building

October 3, 2016

Interim Executive Director Julia-Ellen Davis
South Carolina First Steps
1300 Sumter Street, Suite 100
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: Request for update as adopted in Full Committee Study Report

Dear Ms. Davis:

While the House Legislative Oversight Committee approved its study of the agency on May 4, 2016, notably, the study included a recommendation that the full committee follow up with the agency in a Request for Information, six months from the approval of the Full Committee Report. Listed below please find issues of interest that committee members would like to pursue at this time with the agency. Please provide responses to the questions below on or before Thursday, November 17, 2016.

Participation

- Work with local partnerships to establish 4K classrooms in communities where no other providers are available;
- Develop a pilot program designed to provide startup funds for potential private 4k providers in underserved areas. The development of the pilot program should consider best practices in other states and nontraditional funding mechanism (e.g., social impact bonds);
- What plans, if any, are in place to increase participation in the state's most rural areas;

Common Assessment Tool

- Collaborate with the State Department of Education on a common school readiness assessment tool for use within the public and private sectors for the General Assembly to consider making law and committing to the use of over a period of years;

Interagency Early Childhood Data System

- List of data the agency recommends be maintained for an effective interagency, early childhood data system, other agencies that currently house each type of data, and agencies/consumers that may benefit from having the data in one system that is easily accessible;

4K Costs

- Work in collaboration with the SC Department of Education to study and depict the comprehensive costs of public and private sector 4K provision;

Provisos

- Revisions to the following provisos in the agency's budget submission
 - Update Provisos 1.66 and 1A.31 to adjust the 4K tuition amount to match the law's requirement that the rate be inflation indexed and to support additional materials funding;
 - Update Proviso 1.71 to update the type of assessment for which unspent funds can be used to purchase technology;
 - Update Proviso 1A.67 to require provision of special education accommodations during the administration of readiness assessments;
 - Update Proviso 1A.68 to modify the BabyNet autism therapy services rates;
 - Add a proviso permitting 4K geographic expansion and/or extension of the school year for children with identified early literacy deficiencies;
 - Add a proviso reauthorizing SC First Steps;

Babynet

- The Subcommittee understands that, pursuant to Executive Order 2016-12, BabyNet will be transferred from First Steps to the Department of Health and Human Services. However, since that transfer of responsibilities is not effective until July 1, 2017, requests for updates on items related to BabyNet are still included in this letter.

In your responses to these questions, please provide the subcommittee with any relevant, necessary context information. If the agency has any concerns (1) about the format of these questions yielding answers that do not provide an accurate reflection of the agency, or (2) that these requests may in any manner compromise the safety and security of our state government, agency employees or individual members of the public, please express those concerns, prior to responding to the question, in a written letter to me with a copy to committee staff. Please retain your working papers for these responses in the event the subcommittee would like to view those.

Sincerely,


Signature Redacted

Wm. Weston J. Newton
Committee Chairman

cc: House Legislative Oversight Committee