



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
130 W. CONGRESS, FLOOR 10, TUCSON, AZ 85701-1317
(520) 724-8661 FAX (520) 724-8171

C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

May 29, 2019

Gerald Szostak, Chair
First Things First Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board
142 West Soaring Avenue
Prescott, Arizona 86301
E-mail: gszostak@bcgccaz.org

Marilee Dal Pra, Chief Executive Officer
First Things First
4000 N. Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85012
E-mail: Mdalpra@firstthingsfirst.org

Re: **First Things First Additional Funding for Partnerships**

Dear Mr. Szostak and Ms. Dal Pra:

I am writing to you today because Pima County is being asked to fund what proponents are calling the Pima County Preschool Investment Program (PCPIP). PCPIP is proposed as an expansion to your existing Quality First scholarship program, but targeted specifically at the almost 10,000 three and four year olds in Pima County from families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level who do not currently receive financial assistance to attend high quality preschool.

First, I want to thank you and the regional councils in Pima County for the more than \$10 million budgeted next Fiscal Year to improve the quality of early childhood education in Pima County, and to improve affordability through your Quality First scholarships. In addition, I greatly appreciate the funding awarded to the Pima County Health Department for the Childcare Health Consultation Program and the Oral Health program. With both these health programs, Pima County is only able to provide these services to children and childcare providers because of your funding awards. I recognize the importance of this ongoing partnership, and particularly in the case of the oral health program, look forward to growing the capacity of that program.

Mr. Szostak and Ms. Dal Pra

Re: **First Things First Additional Funding for Partnerships**

May 29, 2019

Page 2

Regarding PCPIP, it has only been three months since I met with PCPIP advocates. At that meeting, they specifically requested Pima County fund such a program and we discussed the challenges in doing such. Since then, my staff and I have been trying to learn as much as possible about the preschool and early childhood education landscape in Arizona and Pima County. Your staff, particularly Jessica Harrington, Southeast Area Senior Regional Director, Michelle Katona, Chief Program Officer, and Kim VanPelt, Chief Regional Officer, have been very helpful in responding to our many questions and developing a draft scope of work for an initial program if it were to be administered by First Things First.

To be clear, I do not see the proposed PCPIP as being a Pima County government program, but instead a program proposed to serve the Pima County geographic region. In that regard, I see school districts, cities and towns, the state (including First Things First), private childcare providers, and the County as necessary partners. While the business community in Pima County has committed some funding for this purpose, and I hope more commitments are forthcoming, it is obvious when looking at examples across the United States that public funding is essential for making such a program work. Arizona counties face state constitutional expenditure limitations, which prohibit expending the level of funding necessary to fully fund such program without voter approval. However, through partnerships, it may be possible to raise the financial support necessary to increase the number of low-income children in Pima County attending high quality preschools, which I believe is a worthy effort based on the proven economic and societal benefits of such programs.

School districts are important partners. Pima County school superintendents have written in support of this effort. Attached is a letter asking them for more details on their current preschool programming and what they can commit to such an effort. As has been the case for the City of Tempe's Tempe PRE program, clearly the cost is lower per child to provide high quality preschool through school district partnerships. However, I do understand the value of the current mixed delivery system that includes private preschool providers and that private preschool providers can often provide coverage during hours of the day that school districts cannot, as well as during summer and non-traditional school district days of operation.

Today, I am asking you to consider whether First Things First can commit increased funding to a program such as PCPIP. Concerns have been raised by at least two members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors and others in the community about the size of the fund balances that you carry over year to year. I have written to my Board twice explaining that part of the fund balance includes your next year program expenses, and the remainder is to hedge the projected decline overtime in your primary revenue source, tobacco taxes. However, if partners in a particular region were willing to commit significant additional funding to further your mission through your established programming, would the First

Mr. Szostak and Ms. Dal Pra

Re: **First Things First Additional Funding for Partnerships**

May 29, 2019

Page 3

Things First Board be willing to consider providing matching funds or another meaningful financial commitment to the partnership?

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/dr

Attachment

c: The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
130 W. CONGRESS, FLOOR 10, TUCSON, AZ 85701-1317
(520) 724-8661 FAX (520) 724-8171

C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

May 22, 2019

Dr. David Baker
Superintendent
Flowing Wells Unified School District
1556 W. Prince Road
Tucson, Arizona 85705

Re: **Your May 13, 2019 Letter Regarding Early Childhood Education**

Dear Dr. Baker:

Thank you for your May 13, 2019 letter to the Pima County Board of Supervisors affirming that you and other local school district superintendents are represented on the Southern Arizona Early Childhood working group. As you note, we all have challenges in raising public funding for this purpose, and even more so for Pima County as Arizona counties are not directly responsible for the education of children. That said, I too share your view of the importance of high quality preschool, especially for families that cannot afford it, and I understand the benefits to Pima County residents and taxpayers of a well-educated community and workforce.

To be clear, I do not see the proposed Pima County Preschool Investment Program (PCPIP) as being a Pima County government program, but instead a program proposed to serve children in the Pima County geographic region. In that regard, I see school districts, cities and towns, the state and private childcare providers as well as the County, as necessary partners. To better understand the potential for such a partnership, it would be helpful if you and other local superintendents could provide the Board of Supervisors and me with more information on how you currently fund preschool programs and the number of children served. Specifically, how much do you spend of district funding on preschool, excluding state and federal funding? What is the cost or range of costs to operate a school district-based preschool classroom that meets the Quality First high quality ratings? Tucson, Sunnyside and Flowing Wells school districts recently participated in the four-year federally funded Preschool Development Grant (PDG) program, which was considered to meet Arizona's guidelines for high quality, full day preschool. The PDG grant, like the proposed PCPIP, was also limited to children from families with incomes below 200 percent of the

Dr. David Baker

Re: **Your May 13, 2019 Letter Regarding Early Childhood Education**

May 22, 2019

Page 2

federal poverty level. For these school districts, the cost to operate a single classroom funded all or in part with this grant may serve as a good cost estimate.

Most importantly, what can each school district contribute towards increasing the number of quality preschool seats for low-income students? My understanding is that some school districts have vacant classroom space in active elementary schools that, with minor modifications, could be used as preschool classrooms. In addition, if certified teachers and assistants were hired to teach these classes, they would be school district employees. It is these two resources in particular that I think school districts are under valuing in their ability to contribute to a PCPIP partnership. For instance, I assume there are there certain central service and school facility specific costs that largely remain the same whether or not these classrooms are vacant. State Statutes require school districts to charge a "reasonable use fee" for lease of school property, including classrooms, and require school districts to annually adopt a rental fee schedule. While these fees can be waived or reduced for certain uses, perhaps these fee schedules can be used to estimate a school district's contribution of vacant classroom space and common area use, along with central service costs. Such a contribution could certainly reduce the gap in additional funding needed per classroom and per child to offer high quality preschool at those locations.

Thank you again for your correspondence. If you have any question in regards to this request, please feel free to contact myself or my Executive Assistant, Nicole Fyffe at Nicole.Fyffe@pima.gov .

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/dr

c: The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Dustin Williams, Pima County Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Robert Dooley, Superintendent, Ajo Unified School District
Dr. David Dumon, Superintendent, Altar Valley School District
Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent, Amphitheater Unified District
Dr. Edna Morris, Superintendent, Baboquivari Unified District
Dr. Mary Kamerzell, Superintendent, Catalina Foothills Unified District
Roxanna Rico, Superintendent, Continental Elementary District

Dr. David Baker

Re: **Your May 13, 2019 Letter Regarding Early Childhood Education**

May 22, 2019

Page 3

H. Wayne Pruett, Governing Board President, Empire School District
Dr. Doug Wilson, Superintendent, Marana Unified School District
Shelly Duran, Principal, Pima Accommodation School District
Mary Smallhouse, Governing Board President, Redington School District
Manuel Valenzuela, Superintendent, Sahuarita Unified School District
Tracy Banker-Murtazda, Superintendent, San Fernando Elementary District
Steven Holmes, Superintendent, Sunnyside Unified School District
Dr. Scott Hagerman, Superintendent, Tanque Verde Unified District
Dr. Gabriel Trujillo, Superintendent, Tucson Unified School District
Dr. Alan Storm, Superintendent, Pima County Joint Technological
Calvin Baker, Superintendent, Vail Unified School District
Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator

PIMA COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT COLLABORATIVE

May 13, 2019

Pima County Board of Supervisors
130 W. Congress Street, 11th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

Honorable Chairman and Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors,

Local superintendents throughout Pima County have had representation on the Southern Arizona Early Childhood working group, which was organized to consider pathways for increasing access to high-quality preschool education. As a representative for the superintendents, I am writing to voice our collective support regarding the importance of early childhood education. The research regarding early childhood education compiled by the Pima County staff was comprehensive and provided a powerful rationale for increasing access to high-quality preschool education throughout our community. Each public school district currently provides access to early childhood education, either directly with the assistance of state grants, tuition, First Things First scholarships and federal IDEA grants, or indirectly through partnerships in federal programs like Head Start. However, we recognize more investments need to be made in order to positively impact children throughout the county. As local school district superintendents, we are interested and supportive of funding measures that can be established to increase access to high-quality early education programs in our districts.

As superintendents, we also recognize the challenges in public funding and share the goal of looking for opportunities to create access to affordable early childhood education. We appreciate everyone's work and commitment to investigating potential funding sources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Baker', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Baker, Ed.D.
Superintendent