COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
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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

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

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 Lesher, 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,

David Baker, Ed.D.
Superintendent