



July 21, 2020

Dear Governor Northam,

We write today to request your help and leadership as families, schools, and communities wrestle with the difficult decisions surrounding the reopening of schools this fall. We have an immediate opportunity to more equitably and strategically inform these critical decisions that impact not only the health and well-being of our youngest and most vulnerable learners but also the ability of parents to return to work and the economic recovery of our Commonwealth. **As members of the VECF board and the *Back to Work Virginia: A Child Care Recovery and Renaissance Task Force*, we urge you to issue an Executive Order directing the formation of cross-sector task forces for each VDOE region (and/or by locality) to address and support the implications from school decisions.**

To bring a more comprehensive approach to complicated solutions, task force members should include at minimum representatives from local school divisions; local/regional social services and health agencies; businesses, employers, and local chambers of commerce; child care providers and associations; city/county administrators; philanthropy; and relevant non-profit partners such as United Ways, YMCAs, and Smart Beginnings. The immediate goal of their work would be to inform back-to-school plans that more fully recognize and address the implications from schools' decisions and schedules for working parents, employers, and children's learning, developmental and support service needs.

While we are cognizant of the conundrum confronting school division leaders, we are also witnessing a concerning disconnect from the needs and realities of Virginia families. If a more collaborative planning process among relevant stakeholders in communities and regions is not required, we fear the consequence of even greater inequities than already exist among our most vulnerable families and populations.

We stand ready to back up this request with support for the task of designing and facilitating these cross-sector partnerships.

We are thankful for the historic investments and legislation that you and the First Lady delivered for Virginia's youngest children. We now have an immediate and precious opportunity to stand firm with the vision that "every child succeeds," ensuring the ability of schools, communities, businesses and early education providers to equitably support families and children throughout and beyond the end of the pandemic crisis.

Sincerely,

Jim Dyke  
Co-Chair, BTW Task Force

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VECF Chair Emeritus

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