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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 321

Offered January 19, 2017

*Commending the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.*

Patron—Dunnavant

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, founded in 2005, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation provides leadership and advocacy and works with partners in the educational field, the child-care community, health care providers, family support agencies, social services, faith leaders, local and state government, and the business community to create and promote innovative initiatives to ensure that Virginia's children are healthy and ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, multidisciplinary research over the past two decades has shown that the architecture of children's brains develops most rapidly in the first five years of life, and that high-quality early learning experiences and socio-emotionally rich environments contribute to the generation of neural connections that are essential to a child's learning and development; and

WHEREAS, by supporting young children's school readiness and overall well-being, early childhood professionals are key partners with families as brain builders; research has borne out that the quality of teacher and caregiver interactions and instruction for children up to five years of age has the strongest impact within the classroom on future learning and achievement; and

WHEREAS, Virginia currently has a fragmented and not always evidence-based system to train the many types of early childhood professionals who interact with children, thereby infringing on the ability of these professionals to do their work in ways that maximize the benefits for children; and

WHEREAS, a strong educational start for children is linked to a stable, talented future workforce in Virginia, and the Commonwealth's business community has affirmed that early education is the beginning of this workforce pipeline; and

WHEREAS, over 10 years, one early childhood educator can impact the educational trajectory for 200 children; improving the skills of early childhood professionals can support better success for children, which in turn has been shown to generate significant savings by increasing future earnings and reducing probabilities of grade repetition, dropping out of high school, teen pregnancy, crime, and dependence on public services; and

WHEREAS, the School Readiness Committee, created by the General Assembly in 2016 has asserted that increasing the skills and competencies of Virginia's early childhood workforce is its first priority in meeting its charge; and

WHEREAS, Virginia should have the most highly skilled early childhood educator and caregiver workforce in the nation, and the use of evidence from brain research can guide decision makers and policy makers in the development of a system to better support skilled early childhood educators and achieve a lasting foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation for its work to advance school readiness in the Commonwealth by promoting a highly competent and structurally sound early childhood workforce; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the foundation's mission to serve and support the future leaders of the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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