



**Paula Brooks**  
Franklin County Board of Commissioners

10/21/2015

Mr. Bill Bush  
The Dispatch  
34 S. 3rd St.  
Columbus, OH. 43215

**Re: Early Learning Strategy Needed – From Birth to School Age**

Dear Mr. Bush:

Thanks for bringing attention to one of the most pressing issues of our community, EARLY LEARNING!

However, it's about "early learning" and early development not just a modest number of preschool slots. Let's give context here.

Indeed, it is good to see the state and city finally joining our longtime county efforts to assist families in need of early learning. We are ALL Franklin County, as I like to say. And, for many years, with Champions of Children, Nationwide Children's Hospital, and others, Franklin County focused efforts on the birth to school time of a child's life when the vast majority of brain development occurs. This 90% of development determines one's total quality of life.

One year of preschool at age 4 for several hundred children is fine, however, the need is significantly greater.

Consider the below from our JFS County Department based on my request for a breakdown on the number of children (of those in poverty or the working poor) we serve--33,000--stated in a county annual report.

"As of August, Franklin County had 20,619 children in subsidized care, 1,120 kids are with 289 Home Providers and 19,431 kids are with 478 Centers ... The 33,000 figure which was reported earlier reflects a rolling unduplicated number depicting the total number of kids served throughout the course of a year."

Just yesterday John and I voted to award substantial contracts to United Way and Action for Children that will continue to further address, through already underway programs, the real crux of the EARLY LEARNING needs of our children. As the Nobel Prize winner in



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economics, Dr. James Heckman has shown there is a 10:1 return on investment in Early Learning. And that's why my personal efforts have been focused here since 2006.

**BOTTOM LINE:**

**THERE ARE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE VASTLY IN THE CITY OF COLUMBUS CORPORATE LIMITS WHO NEED HELP.**

The FEW preschool slots for age four children as addressed in your article this morning, don't even provide help in the Southwestern School District where little kids in poverty live in Columbus on the west side. Where is that help? The west side is suffering! Parents need help with more early learning and developmental milestone checks, throughout Columbus, including children in the Southwestern Schools District, too.

It's time for our entire region to face the facts. Our youngest, most vulnerable babies and children must meet critical developmental milestones way before entering school. This means a strategic, concentrated effort...and dollars...from ALL of us...local, state and federal public sector, and the private sector, too. Too many babies and children are left behind. That's an American competitive waste.

We can't stand for our children becoming just one more talking point in a hotly contested political battle. There are THOUSANDS of babies and children that need help vastly in Columbus' legal jurisdiction that deserve a decent shot at meeting their full, God given potential.

Thank you for caring Bill, and giving voice in your article today to an excruciating city of Columbus need.

Paula Brooks  
Franklin County Commissioner  
Board President 2006, 2009, and 2012