

**Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education –
Public Policy Advocacy**

CALL TO ACTION

We need your help with this matter and we need it now!

March 1, 2010

**Eliminating the Funding for Smart Beginnings and Virginia
Star Quality Initiative A Step Backward for Virginia's Children**

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative

*A system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early
care and education settings that families consider for their children.*

Action Requested:

Please call/e-mail members of the Virginia General Assembly **in opposition** to eliminating funding for the ***Virginia Early Childhood Foundation*** to ensure the quality and integrity of the QRIS standard and the rating and mentoring process

Issue:

The General Assembly appropriation committee's has recommended the total elimination of funding for the *Virginia Early Childhood Foundation*.

- The Senate maintained funding for VECF/Smart Beginnings at the levels put forward by the previous Administration;
- The House completely eliminated funding for VECF/Smart Beginnings;
- The two versions now go to a conference committee to work out the differences

Background:

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative is a system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings that families consider for their children. The VSQI was created to provide a consistent way to distinguish the level of quality in early education programs, allowing parents to make more informed choices. In addition, early learning providers who participate in this completely voluntary program are provided with a way to continually improve the quality of their services.

Talking Points:

- Smart Beginnings Initiatives Local coordination of Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI)

Smart Beginnings local initiatives coalesce and strengthen existing early childhood efforts including home visiting programs, Head Start, and quality childcare enhancements. Rather than competing for funding for these programs Smart Beginnings convenes early childhood leaders to create more efficient and coordinated systems.

- Rating and Improvement of Childcare and Pre-K Classrooms
- Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) is voluntary and market driven
- Quality Child care for Military Families
- Why QRIS?
 - defines standards for early childhood education
 - creates a framework for accountability
 - establishes a network of support and outreach for early childhood professionals
 - provides incentives linked to achieving and maintaining quality standards
 - acts as a consumer education tool to improve the information available to families
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
 - Virginia Early Childhood Foundation ensures the quality and integrity of the QRIS standard and the rating and mentoring process.
 - The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation is a public/private partnership that is leveraging resources to invest in the school readiness of a high quality workforce for Virginia's economic future.
 - The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation has supported and brought leadership to 26 Smart Beginnings initiatives, serving 80 communities across the Commonwealth that are aligning funding and systems in order to be more efficient with resources and positively impact the school readiness of thousands of young children.
 - The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation has a potential opportunity to provide tremendous services to our women and men in uniform.

- Proposed cuts or elimination of funding for school readiness initiative such as the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation will set Virginia's school readiness efforts back years. The adverse impact on workforce development cannot be overstated, potentially crippling the Commonwealth's ability to compete and grow its business.

Contacting Your Delegate and Senator

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Virginia Online Legislature: <http://legis.state.va.us>

The Virginia General Assembly web site provides contact information for legislators, access to bills and resolutions, membership on committees, committee schedules, and much more. One can even determine their own legislators by clicking on “**Who’s My Legislator**” on the top right side of the page.

Legislative Information System (LIS): <http://leg1.state.va.us/>

The LIS provides almost any information one would need about the legislative session, including text and status of bills and resolutions, detailed information on each Delegate and Senator, committee schedules, budget bills and activities of budget committees, daily floor calendars, subject index of bills, as well as the Code of Virginia and the Virginia Administrative Code. Information is also available for past legislative sessions.

Constituent Viewpoint Opinion Line: As a savings the Opinion Line has been discontinued.

Mail addresses for legislators:

House of Delegates, P.O. Box 406, Richmond, Virginia 23218

Senate of Virginia, P.O. Box 396, Richmond, Virginia 23218

Legislative Information: 804-698-1470 (General Assembly Information)

804-698-1500 (House of Delegates)

804-698-7410 (Senate)

Legislators’ Phone Numbers: The phone numbers for legislators’ offices at the General Assembly Building can be obtained from legislative information and the web sites above. They can also be determined as follows: For Delegates, dial 804-698-10xx, replacing the xx with the delegate’s two digit House district number; for Senators, dial 804-698-75yy, replacing the yy with the senator’s two-digit Senate district number.

Clerks' Offices: 804-698-1619 (House of Delegates)

804-698-7400 (Senate)

FAX Numbers: 804-698-1800 (House of Delegates)

804-698-7651 (Senate)

Bill Room: To request copies of bills (if one does not have access to the internet), one can request a bill be sent to them by the bill room at 804-786-6984. One can obtain copies of any bill, resolution and document by visiting the bill room in the basement of the General Assembly Building between 8:15 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. There is also a bill room on the first floor of the Capitol.

E-mail Addresses for Legislators:

House of Delegates: del(first initial)(last name)@house.state.va.us

Senate of Virginia: [district\(\)@sov.state.va.us](mailto:district()@sov.state.va.us)

Parentheses () indicate information that varies for each legislator. (e.g., after “district” insert the two digit number of the Senator’s district, such as 01. Do not include the parentheses in the e-mail address.

Some legislators may prefer to use personal e-mail addresses rather than their legislative e-mail addresses. One should check with their offices to be sure. Who’s my legislator?

At the following website you may enter your address and find your legislators: <http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform>