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STEUART PITTMAN
County Executive

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 63

TO CREATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CHILDCARE TASKFORCE

WHEREAS, the first five years of life are the most critical time in a child's brain development; and

WHEREAS, a child's early years lay the foundation for all that is to come and, in recent years, researchers have learned that the human brain develops the vast majority of its neurons, and is at its most receptive to learning, between birth and three years of age; and

WHEREAS, every \$1 invested in early childhood typically yields \$4 to \$12 in return on investment. Children who attend early childhood programs experience long-term health benefits and are less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended from school; and

WHEREAS, Early Childhood programs are a powerful tool to reduce socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequalities. The children from low-income families are the ones most needing quality early childhood education and care yet they the children least likely to access it; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic led to loss or delays in early learning, including social-emotional learning for much of our 0-5 years of age population; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, the County will have fewer children enrolled in early learning programs, with historically low government investments in early childhood, and a sharp decline in early educators returning to the classroom – exacerbated by low wages for childcare providers; and

WHEREAS, by 2026, the number of childcare providers in Anne Arundel County are predicted to continue declining by 30% while births have stayed stable over the past five years; and

WHEREAS, Anne Arundel County's Early Childhood Commission works to bring together public and private partners in Anne Arundel County to meet the needs of, and elevate, a child's first five years to ensure all children have what they need to be successful in school and life; and

WHEREAS, the Early Childhood Commission, on behalf of the County Executive, formed a workgroup in 2022, to study the issues of childcare and reported that economic and workforce development agencies, the business community and childcare providers should all play a role in addressing childcare issues; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, at the direction of the County Executive, an Early Childhood/Childcare Summit was organized, developed, and sponsored by Anne Arundel County's Economic Development and Workforce Development agencies, Maryland State legislators, the Early Childhood Commission and the County Executive's Office. The summit was attended by over 200 people and addressed issues related to the decreasing supply of childcare in the County; and

WHEREAS, the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation has worked to increase the availability of childcare providers through business attraction and retention services such as financing, counseling, workforce training grants and technical assistance; and

WHEREAS, Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation is focusing on working with childcare providers to ensure their voices are heard and that they are part of the solutions when considering pay, training, and qualifications; and

WHEREAS, summit attendees submitted a list of recommendations to the County Executive for immediate action.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steuart Pittman, County Executive, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Charter and laws of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, hereby order and direct on this 26th day of February, 2024, as follows:

1. Executive Order No. 20, issued by former County Executive Steven R. Schuh, is hereby rescinded.
2. The Early Childhood Childcare Taskforce is created to signify the urgency of the issues related to childcare.
3. The Taskforce shall meet as frequently as necessary to perform its duties and functions under this Executive Order, but no less than quarterly.
4. The Taskforce shall conduct its meetings pursuant to all applicable County and State laws, regulations, and procedures, including the Maryland Open Meetings Act.
5. The Taskforce shall consist of nineteen (19) voting members. Of these 19 voting members:
 - A. at least one (1) member shall be a representative of the:
 - i. business community;

- ii. economic development;
- iii. workforce development; and
- iv. local legislative delegation; and

B. fifteen (15) members shall be representative of a diverse group of community stakeholders to the extent practical.

6. Members of the Taskforce shall be appointed by the County Executive for four (4) year terms. Members shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms. A member whose term has expired shall serve until a successor is appointed. Members shall serve at the pleasure of the County Executive and may be removed at any time, with or without cause. Members shall be considered removed for cause if they miss more than one-half of the meetings held during a twelve (12) month period.

7. The County Executive shall appoint a member as Chair from among the voting members of the Taskforce. The Chair shall: preside at all the meetings of the Taskforce; meet as requested with the County Executive and other County representatives; provide information on the Taskforce; represent the Taskforce at all relevant meetings and functions; oversee preparation of the reports to the County Executive and County Council; enforce compliance with this Executive Order, the Maryland Open Meetings Act, and the County Code.

8. A. The Taskforce shall advise and make recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council no later than June 30, 2024, on the following:

- i. legislative and policy priorities to increase the availability of quality child care;
- ii. innovative funding and operational models;
- iii. workforce and training opportunities; and
- iv. geographic and socio/economic gaps in services.

B. The Taskforce shall also advise and make recommendations to the County Executive and County Council on the following:

- i. benchmarks of school readiness skills for children entering kindergarten;
- ii. local needs for the quality and availability of early childhood development programs and services;
- iii. opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally-funded and state-funded early childhood development programs and services;

iv. increasing the overall participation of children in existing programs, including methods to reach populations who are underrepresented and have special needs, and elevating the quality of existing programs;

v. Local professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators;

vi. local family engagement practices with the State Family Engagement Coalition, local library family advisory councils, and local Reach Out and Read activities; and

vii. local coordination for early childhood initiatives and reforms.

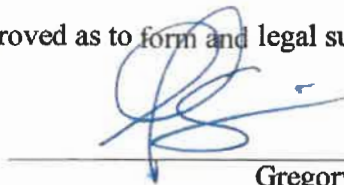
This Executive Order shall be archived at the Office of Law and remain in existence until altered or terminated by a subsequent Executive Order.



STEUART PITTMAN

County Executive

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:



Gregory J. Swain
County Attorney