



Contact: **Karine Stallings**
Durham's Partnership for Children
Community Development Manager
403-6960 x221 599-5855
(mobile)

PRESS RELEASE

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UNPRECEDENTED PROPOSED CUTS TO STATE'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM SPURS PARTNERSHIP BOARD TO PREPARE POLICY STATEMENT, TAKE ACTION.

*Durham's Partnership for Children Board of Directors endorses legislative agenda for the
first time in organization's history*

Durham, N.C. – Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative, Friday, announced that its Board leadership has drafted and endorsed a legislative agenda that addresses the deep cuts proposed for the state's Smart Start system and the More at Four Program.

"Board volunteers are grappling with legislative plans that could dismantle Durham's early childhood system leaving families with young children with a fraction of the resources for early care and education, family support and health services," says Durham's Partnership for Children Executive Director Marsha Basloe. "The Board wanted to voice their concern to Durham delegates that these cuts will hurt thousands of Durham County families with young children."

Under the Board's direction, Durham's Partnership for Children will share the legislative agenda with Durham's elected officials adhering to advocacy guidelines under its Smart Start contract.

Durham's Partnership for Children works with community agencies and nonprofits, Durham Public Schools, the business community, local government and individuals to close the preparation gap for young children beginning at birth.

There are fewer resources today, more children and more needs, Basloe said. Today Durham County's early childhood system has \$3 million less for young children compared to 2000 and nearly 6,000 more children birth to age 5.

Using private funds and non agency resources, Durham's Partnership for Children released an advocacy web site www.champions4youngchildren.net to distribute policy and legislative materials to supporters.

About Durham's Partnership for Children

Durham's Partnership for Children was founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County. Smart Start is North Carolina's nationally recognized initiative to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start helps working parents pay for childcare, improves the quality of childcare and provides health and family support services in every North Carolina County. The Partnership works with funded partners (affiliated organizations) to achieve its mission: "To mobilize and unify the Durham community to create and support innovative and successful approaches to serving the needs of children 0-5 and their families." Durham's Partnership for Children also administers the Governor's More at Four Program in Durham County. For more information about Durham's Partnership for Children, visit www.dpfc.net or call 919-403-6960, ext 221.
