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Board Matter

Appointment of the Head Start Policy Council's Interim Director

Members of the Board,

After serving children, families, and staff for close to twenty years as director of Fairfax County's Head Start/Early Head Start program, Jennifer Branch recently retired from the County. She leaves the program in excellent standing, and I am grateful for her dedication and commitment to serving our community.

Staff has begun the competitive recruitment process for hiring a new Head Start Director and will be reaching out to stakeholders and partners throughout Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia as well as national networks, as we wish to attract strong candidates for this complex and rewarding position.

During this transition period, the County will need to appoint an interim Head Start director. As the grantee of both federal grants, Head Start/Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grant, the Board of Supervisors serves as the governing body for the Head Start/Early Head Start program in partnership with the Head Start Policy Council. Federal Head Start Performance Standards require the governing body and Policy Council to approve key personnel appointments. This includes approval of both the Head Start director and Chief Financial Officer positions.

As Chairperson of the Board's Health and Human Services Committee and Board liaison to the Head Start Program, I would like to request the Board's consideration of the appointment of Ms. Janet Stewart to serve as Interim Director.

Ms. Stewart has over twenty years of experience in Head Start. In her current position, she serves as Fairfax County Head Start Quality Assurance Manager, ensuring the program meets federal, state, and local regulations and program standards, and serves as an assistant to the director. This past year she has played a leadership role in the County's Head Start program and had the opportunity to learn from Ms. Branch about all aspects of Fairfax County's grants, build relationships with Policy Council members, and to support delegate partners Fairfax County Public Schools and Higher Horizons Day Care.

In addition to her experience in Fairfax County, Ms. Stewart has extensive experience supporting all Head Start service areas in her various roles at EACHS Head Start in West Virginia. Her previous positions include family services specialist, nutrition coordinator, family service worker and area supervisor among other certifications. I believe that Ms. Stewart's knowledge of Fairfax County's program and grants and her lengthy career serving at EACHS Head Start, as well as her service on Head Start Associations Board of Directors, uniquely position her to serve in the role of Interim Director for Fairfax County's Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Ms. Stewart will be supervised by the director of the Office for Children.

As required by the Head Start Performance Standards, the Fairfax County Head Start Policy Council has voted to approve the appointment of Ms. Stewart as Interim Director. Therefore, I move without objection that the Board of Supervisors vote to approve the appointment of Ms. Janet Stewart as Interim Director of Fairfax County's Head Start/Early Head Start Program.

Additionally, staff are also currently recruiting for the Head Start Chief Financial Officer position, and I anticipate returning later this summer with a request to approve the appointment of a new director of Head Start and Chief Financial Officer.