

Invest in Children Budget Hearing

October 17, 2019

(for Budget 2020-2021)

Good afternoon. I am Rebekah Dorman, Director of Invest in Children and Administrator of the County Office of Early Childhood. Thank you for this opportunity to come before Council today and for your support of the work we do.

These wise investments in building the brains of our youngest citizens have great and long-lasting impact... this is supported by lots of data-- our own research as well national studies. This is an investment with a great return.

This year I am proud to say that IIC celebrated our 20th birthday. Sometimes we take for granted the depth and breadth of the early childhood system we have built here... But whenever I talk with people from other communities I realize once again how amazing and unique IIC is...

Because we have been around a long time we felt it important to review and refresh our mission. It now reads... *The mission of Invest in Children is to mobilize resources and research to ensure the well-being of all young children in Cuyahoga County. We provide a continuum of targeted services, prenatal to kindergarten, for children and their families; build awareness; advocate; and measure our impact. We aim to achieve equity in access to services and eliminate racial/ethnic disparities in child and family outcomes.* (In particular we felt it important to emphasize our accountability... both in terms of measuring service outcomes and in providing equitable access to services).

We are extremely proud of the outcomes we have achieved with our flagship UPK program. We know that children who attend UPK are much better prepared for kindergarten both in terms of language and literacy, as well social skills.

We have a mighty staff of 10 and our delighted this year to also have a Public Sector Fellow with funding from the Cleveland Foundation. We know that we are making a difference in the lives of the over 4000 children in UPK as well as the over 2700 children who receive home visiting annually, over 800 who receive mental health services in their home and the over 1000 child care providers throughout the county who receive TA and training to improve their quality.

I also want to mention that four years ago we assumed management responsibilities of the Child Fatality Review Process and Report contract, and the CCBH continues as our partner and the vendor for this contract.

So now I am moving on now to our budget which is essentially status quo. Our recommended budget for 2020 is at \$18,403,068 and there is a slight increase for 2021 of \$360,827 for staff salary increases and administrative charge backs.

This is flat funding which will allow us to continue to serve children and families at the same rate as the past two years. There are no additions or deletions.

We are able to maintain the expanded UPK program continuing to draw down both the public and private dollars in tandem. At our current spending rate we are confident that we will be able to maintain the current number of children served through the end of 2021.

Finally, I've been asked to prepare responses to the following questions:

1) Is the staffing level the same. Could you use more/less staff.

As mentioned above, we have 10 FT staff, which is the same as last year. In addition, our Business Manager is in an HHS shared service position working with IIC and with FCFC. We believe that we are at the appropriate staffing level.

2) What were your additional items requested in the 2020-21 budget.

For this budget cycle, we requested an additional \$379,000 (\$758,000 over two years) for the SPARK Program (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids). SPARK is a home-based early literacy program for 3 and 4-year olds. This request was not included in our budget.

Currently, SPARK serves 230 children in the following school districts: Cleveland Metropolitan (select elementary schools), East Cleveland, Maple Heights, Cleveland Heights, and Warrensville Heights. The additional funds requested will allow us to serve an additional 70 children in high need areas, for example 1) additional Cleveland Metropolitan schools; 2) Bedford; 3) Brooklyn; 4) Garfield; and 5) Richmond Heights at an average cost of \$2,100/ child. The additional dollars requested will supplant unstable and unsustainable private foundation funds to put this program on a solid foundation for the future

3) What are your top 3 areas you would improve if you had more HHS Levy dollars.

First, we need a plan to address the long-term sustainability of the UPK program. While there are public and private sufficient dollars for us to maintain current levels of service during the upcoming budget, we will need a decision about how we will move forward after that by December of 2020 to allow us to plan and conduct the RFP that will need to occur in 2021. To maintain our current expansion we will need an additional \$5 million/year beginning in 2022.

Second, we would like to expand our Newborn Home Visiting program. This program provides a one-time visit from CCBH public health nurse to families who during the perinatal period to families on Medicaid or have other high risk conditions such as domestic violence.

There is evidence from the program that families who receive a NBHV are less likely to experience a sleep related death than families who do not. Consequently, we would like to increase the number of families who get a NBHV. Specifically, we would like to be able to offer the program to those 800 eligible moms who deliver at Hillcrest Hospital.

Finally, we are participating in the STiR (Startup in Residence) program via our county Office of Innovation and Performance. Just yesterday our RFP was posted nationally and we hope that we will have a viable proposal from a startup company to computerize much of the massive paperwork involved in serving over 4000 families in our UPK program, including the invoicing, scholarship applications and oversight of their quality dollar spending. We anticipate that we would need additional funding in order to fully develop and implement this new software.

At this time I am prepared to take your questions.