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**SOUTH CAROLINA SUMMIT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD TO FOCUS ON THE  
IMPACT OF INVESTING IN YOUNG CHILDREN**

**Columbia, S.C.**— The 2019 South Carolina Summit on Early Childhood, presented by BB&T™ and the S.C. Department of Health and Human Services, will highlight the economic impact and significant return that investing in early childhood can bring to South Carolina. The preeminent statewide early childhood convening will be held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center at 1101 Lincoln Street, Columbia, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, December 6.

The only event of its kind, established in 2015, the Summit is expected to attract a broad audience of more than 400, including policy-makers, program leaders, practitioners, business leaders, nonprofit and state agency directors, researchers and advocates who will share strategies, research and dialogue to foster a strong foundation for the children of South Carolina. The one-day event is hosted by South Carolina First Steps and the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council, along with Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, Sen. Greg Hembree, chairman of the SC Senate K-12 Education Committee, and Rep. Rita Allison, chairman of the SC House Education and Public Works Committee.

“The unique gathering at this conference brings together the right voices to make a difference in our state,” said Georgia Mjartan, executive director of South Carolina First Steps. “The collaboration across sectors that takes place makes this a one-of-a-kind convening.”

The keynote presenters and breakout panelists will give perspective to the Summit’s focus on the economics of early childhood. The morning keynote speaker [Rob Grunewald](#), an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, has conducted research on community development and regional economic issues. He co-authored "[Early Childhood Development Economic Development with a High Public Return](#)" and has written several subsequent articles on the economic and social impact of early learning. Afternoon keynoter [Elizabeth "Liz" Huntley](#), a

child advocate and litigation attorney, serves on the boards of the Alabama Children First foundation and the Alabama School Readiness Alliance where she a member of the Pre-K Task Force. Her talks frequently draw from her 2015 memoir, *More Than a Bird*, which recounts her journey from childhood trauma to personal and professional success.

Historically, the event has been supported and promoted by all members of the state’s [Early Childhood Advisory Council](#), which includes the state agencies that serve young children: [SC Department of Health and Human Services](#), [SC Department of Social Services](#), [SC Department of Education](#), [SC Department of Health and Environmental Control](#), [SC First Steps](#), [SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs](#), [Children’s Trust of SC](#), and the [SC Head Start Collaboration Office](#). While South Carolina First Steps takes the lead in coordinating the South Carolina Summit on Early Childhood, this is truly a collaborative event and is the most inclusive event of its kind in the state’s early childhood space.

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### **About SC First Steps**

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness (SCFS) is both a nonprofit and state agency and is the **only statewide, dedicated comprehensive early childhood agency** in South Carolina focused on getting children ages birth through five ready for school and life success. Last year, SC First Steps directly served 28,427 children across all 46 counties.

At its core, SC First Steps is a children and family first organization. Its work to support the success of all children from birth through age five by serving families, their communities and early childhood education providers.

Established in 1999 by the South Carolina General Assembly to close the gap on students’ preparedness for success in school, South Carolina First Steps takes a holistic approach to accomplishing its mission of preparing all children for success in school, work and life, offering services that improve children’s health, strengthen families, expand access to quality child care, increase participation in four-year-old kindergarten programs and help transition rising kindergartners into school.

### **About S.C. Early Childhood Advisory Council**

The South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) includes directors of state agencies, elected officials and government entities and other state-level early childhood leaders. As the connector and convener of all early childhood serving agencies, South Carolina First Steps is the home of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which works to develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive system for early childhood services in the state.