



PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY

March 19, 2021

Ladies Learning to Lead – We were approached by Samantha Vance who heard that we might have some available office space and wondered if it might be appropriate for their nonprofit. We had one office and a cubicle, which was sufficient for their needs. <https://www.13ladies.org/>. We also provide a cubicle for Daniela Villasmil of The Children's Movement, their Tallahassee staff person, as we had the cubicle available. Since they also advocate for our programs, this seemed like a good barter system!

Children's Week – Much of our time has been devoted to ensuring that Children's Week occurs in a new and creative way. Jinan Higginbotham (my former Head Start student and success) is leading our efforts at the Forum. She is doing an amazing job in juggling all of the competing demands.

Legislative – The session is in full swing. Claudia has been wonderful in getting us into the right meetings and offices to shore us up so far. We were grateful to be in the Governor's budget, which typically aligns with the Department's legislative budget request, but deviated this year. The Governor's budget restored the non-recurring dollars of \$7M for T.E.A.C.H. and included Help Me Grow at \$1.8M. We've had conversations with both the House and the Senate staffers and legislators to hopefully have them concur. We are waiting, however, for our appropriations issue for Help Me Grow to be put on the agenda.

Parent Engagement Follow-Up – In conversation during the last board meeting, the idea of engaging parents in a grassroots type effort was discussed with some direction from the board to proceed in this endeavor. After consulting with our partner organizations from around the country (and those that currently have active parent engagement campaigns), they advised to wait until after COVID to consider this. They are having difficulty maintaining interest for obvious reasons – everyone is distracted just trying to meet the demands of parenting with school, work, etc. We will delay this activity until perhaps in the fall and then reconsider our options.

Sad News – Our receptionist for 17 years at the Children's Forum passed away recently. Mary Terry was with us up until she took leave last year due to health issues. Mary was a sweet soul who always had a gentle spirit and was kind to everyone, either on the phone or in person. Her passing was hard on the staff who had grown close to Mary over the years.

Child Care Relief – As you may have heard, the most recent bill passed by Congress – the American Rescue Plan provides significant relief for the child care infrastructure with Florida's share estimated at \$2.4B. The funding will be administered through the Office of Early Learning. The funds are intended to stabilize the child care industry, provide relief for parents with young children, and for the workforce. Specific details about how the state will administer the funds are not yet known.