



PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY

September 24, 2021

- I. **Dr. Blechman's Celebration of Life** – We are so sad about the passing of Dr. Wil. At present, his Celebration of Life is planned for October 14th at 7:00 PM for a virtual service. The Forum is working to help Rachel Blechman, Wil's widow, with facilitating the technology part of the service. We are more than happy to assist her with the details. Our heart goes out to the entire family. We will send out a link once the details are finalized. The article that appeared in the Miami Herald is included. It was a wonderful tribute to his life and his amazing contributions on behalf of children and their well-being.
- II. **New Chancellor for the Division of Early Learning, Matt Mears** – We had an opportunity to meet the Chancellor and share the Forum's programs as well as our commitment on behalf of young children and the early learning workforce. He visited the Forum's office for the meeting and we had his attention for an hour and a half! We are pleased with the meeting and the opportunity to help educate him. He is an attorney who has worked with the Florida Department of Education for the past 6.5 years. He appears to be open and very interested in learning.
- III. **Consortium Recommendations for the Federal Funding** – The Consortium also met with Matt Mears later in the week to discuss our recommendations for the ARPA funding coming to Florida. (See attached). While no specific commitments were made, he was receptive to the recommendations and expressed interest in considering the stakeholder perspectives with regard to the funding.
- IV. **INCENTIVE\$ Legislative Ask** – The Children's Forum is requesting funding for the INCENTIVE\$ program to be available statewide (currently only available in Hillsborough, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties). The estimate for doing so is \$22.4M. This really isn't unreasonable considering the federal funding coming into Florida. We have shared this request with Matt Mears and the Consortium is supportive. Since legislative committees are beginning to meet, Claudia and I will be working to connect with the right folks to support the request. (See enclosed)
- V. **Help Me Grow Legislative Ask** – We are also requesting funding to take the Help Me Grow program statewide (currently in limited number of counties). The total for Help Me Grow to go statewide is estimated at \$4.5M.

VI. COVID Dependent Child Quarantine Policy – We drafted a policy memo in response to the closures of the schools and the impact on non-exempt staff. This was necessary to provide equity in the administration of benefits allowable to both exempt and non-exempt staff. Requesting board approval (see enclosed).