

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Daniel Herrera

dherrera@rabengroup.com

202-930-6805

Opportunity Task Force Releases *Leading on Opportunity* Report, Announces Next Steps for the Community

Charlotte, NC – The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force today released *Leading on Opportunity*, a set of findings and recommendations to honor the spark in all young people and ensure they have the tools and opportunities to thrive. The report outlines the key determining factors for a child's chance of success and calls for action and continued community input to implement the work of the Task Force.

"I want to thank the 20 community members who made up the Opportunity Task Force and spent 18 months investigating why the odds of moving out of poverty are so low for children born in our community," said **Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown**, Task Force Co-Chair and Senior Vice President for Community Wellness and Education at Novant Health. "The result of our work together is a strategic framework with the potential for significant, enduring impact, along with actionable recommendations to improve mobility and opportunities."

"Our vision is for a Charlotte-Mecklenburg community that cares about all our children and youth—regardless of income, race or zip code—and where they feel they belong, have big dreams, and have the opportunities to achieve those dreams," said **Dee O'Dell**, Task Force Co-Chair and Senior Vice President at US Bank. "We view this report as a living document, one that will be refined and added to over time. We hope it will serve as a catalyst for immediate action and for our community to come together to find solutions."

Key Areas of Focus

The Task Force identified three key determinants of economic mobility and two cross-cutting factors they believe are most likely to have the greatest influence on the opportunity trajectory for our children, youth and families.

Determinants:

- **Early Care and Education:** Expanding access to quality child care and public pre-K programs and promoting positive early brain development.
- **Career and College Readiness:** Advancing educational and skill development of all our young people to ensure they are well prepared for family-supporting jobs and careers.
- **Family and Child Stability:** Strengthening families so all members are safe healthy, financially secure and supportive of a child's healthy development.

Cross-Cutting Factors:

- **Impacts of Segregation:** Acknowledging the significant role segregation and racialization have played in our current opportunity narrative and committing to breaking down those barriers.
- **Social Capital:** Ensuring all children, youth, and families have relationships in the community to connect them to information, ideas, resources, support and opportunities.

New Council to Ensure Accountability, Measure Progress

The Task Force co-chairs officially handed their report to James E. Ford and Andrea B. Smith, the co-chairs of the new community-led Leading on Opportunity Council,. Ford and Smith will continue to work with the community to build a structure and strategic plan to implement and measure the 21 priorities, 91 key recommendations and more than 100 implementation tactics. The work will be supported on an interim basis by staff at Foundation For The Carolinas and the United Way of Central Carolinas.

“With collective focus and accountability to the communities most impacted, we can ensure that Charlotte-Mecklenburg is not just a place where people come to live, but also a place where all our own children can grow and thrive,” said **James E. Ford**, Co-Chair of the Leading on Opportunity Council and Program Director at The Public School Forum of North Carolina.²

“The thoughtful analysis of this report gives us a launching pad to drive meaningful change by setting specific goals, measuring progress, and holding all of us accountable for helping our children succeed and creating greater opportunity for all in our community,” said **Andrea B. Smith**, Co-Chair of the Leading on Opportunity Council and Chief Administrative Officer at Bank of America.

To learn more about the *Leading on Opportunity* effort online, visit www.leadingonopportunity.org.