

June 4, 2019

Foundation For The Carolinas reaches \$6.2 million fundraising goal for private sector support of universal pre-k in Mecklenburg County
Money raised will fund scholarships and other support for future pre-k teachers

CHARLOTTE – Foundation For The Carolinas announced it has reached its \$6.2 million fundraising goal from the private sector to support Mecklenburg County’s MECK Pre-K initiative, which aims to provide universal pre-k education for all 4-year-olds in Mecklenburg County by FY24. The \$6.2 million will be used to fund scholarships and other support for future pre-k teachers studying at local colleges and universities.

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Pledges include commitments from Albemarle Corporation; Atrium Health; Bank of America; Barings, LLC; John M. Belk Endowment; Brighthouse Financial; Charlotte Merchants Foundation; Coca-Cola Consolidated; Duke Energy; Foundation For The Carolinas; Ingersoll Rand; Howard R. Levine Foundation; Leon Levine Foundation; Merancas Foundation; Novant Health; PwC; C.D. Spangler Foundation and Wells Fargo.

The announcement was made ahead of Tuesday’s Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners’ FY20 budget discussion and vote. Mecklenburg County Manager Dena Diorio has recommended an additional \$21.1 million toward early care and education in the FY20 budget, with a goal of incrementally increasing funding and achieving universal pre-k for all 4-year-olds by FY24.

The increased number of students served will require additional pre-k teachers, which is what the private sector is well-suited to support. Under the plan, Mecklenburg pre-k teacher salaries will match their Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools counterparts.

“We know that if we want to achieve universal pre-k, we need to increase our pool of qualified pre-k teachers,” said Foundation For The Carolinas President & CEO Michael Maricano. “I’m pleased the private sector understood this need and stepped up in just a matter of days to support this initiative. Universal pre-k is essential to improving upward mobility in our community, because it ensures ALL students start their primary education with the same academic advantages, and it positively impacts a parent’s ability to work. Thanks to the generosity of our private sector, we’re one step closer to living in a more equitable community.”

Providing access to quality care and education for all Mecklenburg County children, along with strengthening the pre-k teacher workforce, were strategies recommended in the Leading On Opportunity report. The MECK Pre-K initiative began because the report found early childhood care and education to be a key determinant in improving upward mobility.

After the Leading on Opportunity report was released in March 2017, the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council funded an in-depth study, at the request of Mecklenburg County, on how to implement universal pre-k. The report recommended incrementally “ramping up” pre-k enrollment through FY24 to ensure the pool of qualified pre-k teachers could meet the increased demand.

About Foundation For The Carolinas

Founded in 1958, Foundation For The Carolinas is the sixth-largest nonprofit community foundation in the country, serving donors and a broad range of charitable purposes in North and South Carolina. With assets of \$2.54 billion, FFTC’s mission is to inspire philanthropy and empower individuals to create a better community. Visit www.fftc.org.