

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY CHILDREN'S CABINET

In Chattanooga-Hamilton County, we are in the fortunate position to build upon a rich local history of research and advocacy efforts aimed at improving the odds for our county's children. Beginning in the 1980s, early childhood advocate Mai Bell Hurley worked tirelessly for decades to impress upon businesses, politicians, and the general public that children are the future. And that they are a worthy investment.

Since that time, this community has seen a few iterations of collaborative early childhood groups whose work resulted in strategies intending to prepare children for school and measure the impact of reading programs, various curricula, and wraparound supports. Each of these initiatives was valuable in that they brought awareness to the fact that children do actually learn a great deal about the world before they start Kindergarten, so there is a great need for quality learning opportunities for all young children, if they are to succeed in life.

But for too long, programs and collaborative efforts have worked on one system of influence at a time. We now know, a reading program alone will not equip children to be successful in school and life. Parent engagement programs alone will not equip children to be successful in school and life. A true shift for our children will only be realized when multiple systems are working together to address the individual needs of children and remove the barriers to their innate ability to thrive and experience a future without limits.

Early Matters and the Bright Start Steering Committee, with the input of stakeholders from across the county, have compiled a plan that would simultaneously address the many influencers to a child's academic and life outcomes. This plan builds on the work of Chattanooga 2.0 but is just the beginning of a coordinated and aligned effort to support children and families in our community across systems.

There are many more needs than can be addressed in one plan, but by working together we can all play a role in ensuring children have the supports needed to be successful in third grade and beyond.



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Hamilton County Schools  
Superintendent



Weston Wamp  
Hamilton County Mayor



Tim Kelly  
City of Chattanooga Mayor