



Florida Children and Youth Cabinet

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Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Members

Wansley Walters
Chair

Secretary Elizabeth Dudek
Agency for Health Care Administration

Director Barbara Palmer
Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Secretary Mike Carroll
Department of Children and Families

Secretary Christina K. Daly
Department of Juvenile Justice

Commissioner Pam Stewart
Department of Education

Surgeon General John Armstrong, MD
Department of Health

Executive Director Alan Abramowitz
Guardian ad Litem

Director Rodney MacKinnon
Office of Early Learning

Director Zackary Gibson
Governor's Office of Adoption
and Child Protection

Justice Barbara Pariente
Designee of the Chief Justice

Senator Eleanor Sobel
Designee of the Senate President

Representative Gayle Harrell
Designee of the Speaker of the House

Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte
Designee of the Attorney General

Victoria Zepp
Designee of the Chief Financial Officer

Ellen Anderson
Governor's Appointee

Dr. Judy Schaechter
Governor's Appointee

David Lawrence
Governor's Appointee

Steven Uhlfelder
Governor's Appointee

Judge Sandy Karlan
Governor's Appointee

September 15, 2015

The Honorable Andy Gardiner
President of the Florida Senate
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet, I am writing to encourage you to make early childhood a top priority for the 2016 Legislative Session. Informed by Florida's Campaign for the First 1,000 Days, the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet voted unanimously during its August 27, 2015 meeting that the first 1,000 days of a child's life should be at the top of the state's priorities.

A major coalition of child-focused advocates, authorities and organizations across the state, Florida's Campaign for the First 1,000 Days is a research-driven, evidence-based public awareness and advocacy campaign to promote the critical development opportunities that exist for a child in his or her first timeframe of life. These are the years that represent 85 percent of a child's brain growth and are immensely important to a child's development.

The vision of the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet is that all children in Florida grow up safe, healthy, educated and prepared to meet their full potential. As a Cabinet that is tasked by the Florida Statutes with improving the lives of children through inter-agency communication and collaboration, the focus on early childhood development initiatives for the first 1,000 days from birth to age three is a step toward making sure that Florida's children thrive. There is not a serious human service crisis, including crime and adult incarceration, that could not be averted or improved by an emphasis on this stage of a Floridian's life.

Ample national research informs us that if we get those years right, chances are that the child will have momentum all of his or her life. Conversely, ground lost during that developmental period can often never be made up. Knowing that the first 1,000 days is the most cost effective time to lay the foundation for lifetime success, we ask for your leadership to enact legislation this session to move this pivotal issue forward.

On behalf of all the members listed on this page,

Wansley Walters
Chair