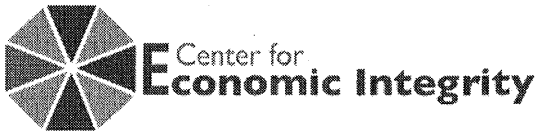


AGENDA MATERIAL

DATE 5-4-21

ITEM NO. RA 12



509 E Radburn Street, Tucson, AZ 85702

www.economicintegrity.org

Phone (520) 250-4416

April 29, 2021

Letter of Support to:

Pima County Board of Supervisors & Staff

Pima County Administration & Staff

Re: May 4, 2021 Agenda Item 12

Pima Early Education Program Recommendations for Year 1 Staff recommends approval of the Year 1 plan for the Pima Early Education Program, and that the Board provide clarification as to whether staff should plan for a multi-year program.

Madam Chair and Supervisors,

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak on the record in support of the above reference measure. Your vote on February 16, 2021 to direct county administration staff to include \$10 million dollars in the upcoming 2022 Fiscal Year budget toward preschool scholarships sent a clear message to the broader community. This willingness to provide direction and leadership has opened the way for additional partnerships and collaboration to occur that simply wasn't possible prior to your vote. The Pima Early Education Program has been embraced by cities and towns, school districts, providers, state agencies, business, philanthropic and nonprofits. It has been an exciting and busy few months for all involved.

The year 1 plan acknowledges the current circumstances and conditions we as a community, are still grappling with as a result of the pandemic. It takes into consideration many different view points about the best and most efficient way to launch, implement and oversee a multi-faceted program and it leaves space for learning and revisions. No plan is perfect and no plan can foresee exactly where challenges may arise prior to implementation. This plan was crafted with input from many different stakeholders and it reflects our collective good faith efforts to-date in partnership with County Administration staff. *Staff are to be commended for laying out a detailed, clear path forward for this program while still maintaining flexibility.* This flexibility will allow the program to evolve as more community input and more time allows. **The Center for Economic Integrity strongly recommends the adoption of the year 1 plan.**

The public policy landscape continues to change and evolve at all levels of government. There are many factors that remain outside of our scope. Pima County is ahead of the curve with regards addressing what is needed for a strong, sustainable economic recovery in our region. Longer-term, Pima County will be in a position to outperform other jurisdictions from the outset with a preschool infrastructure that is well supported and a scholarship program that has been designed in community partnership. Any future infusions of federal or state dollars will serve to strengthen an already high performing on-the-ground effort. **The Center for Economic Integrity strongly recommends that county staff be directed to continue to plan for a multi-year funding commitment by the Board of Supervisors.**

When social and economic justice advocates raise important issues with policy makers the tendency is to point to the next level of government for policy solutions. "This isn't a local issue it is a state issue" or, "This isn't a state issue it is a federal issue." The truth is; **this is an all of the above issue.** We are all responsible and accountable collectively. Your vote, your leadership and vision pave the way for all of us to join together so that our children, our families and our entire community can grow and thrive equitably.

With deep gratitude,

Kelly S. Griffith
Executive Director

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