



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 24, 2006

CONTACT: Meghan Wedd McGuire
(803) 734-0479
mwmcguir@scfirststeps.org

Study Says Child Care Industry is Vital to South Carolina's Economy

Columbia, S.C. – First Steps announced the public release today of the first-ever study on the impact of the child care industry on the state's economy, *The Economic Impacts of the Child Care Industry in South Carolina: Investing Early for Future Economic and Community Benefits*.

Authored by Dr. Donald Schunk of the University of South Carolina's Moore School of Business, the study profiles the state's child care industry, examines its current and potential economic value, and recommends methods to support positive change for child care in South Carolina. The development of final recommendations is planned as part of the Governor's Summit on Early Learning in early 2007.

"Child care providers are a necessary piece of the economic infrastructure of South Carolina," said Dr. Schunk. "Just as a transportation network, utilities, quality education, and a health care system are vital for supporting economic activity, so too is the availability of child care."

The study was commissioned by Richland County First Steps to School Readiness and the Richland County Early Education Council with support from S.C. First Steps, the United Way of the Midlands, and Voices for South Carolina's Children.

Important points of the study include:

- S.C.'s child care industry has an estimated \$782.2 million impact on the state's economy, comparable to the newspaper publishing industry, the TV/radio industry or the poultry and egg industry.
- The child care industry enables over 75,600 parents to participate in S.C.'s workforce. These parents earn an estimated \$2.4 billion annually.
- There are over 2,800 child care facilities in S.C., providing care for nearly 118,200 children and jobs for over 15,150 people. Annual wages for those employees amount to \$228.4 million.

"We have long known that a quality child care experience is vital to the education of our youngest children. This historic study reveals to business and public policy leaders that child care is also a critical part of the Palmetto State economy," said First Steps Executive Director Susan DeVenny. "Dr. Schunk's work outlines a clear correlation between economic development and high quality child care."

The study can be found online at www.rcfirststeps.org/EconomicImpact.pdf.

– ##### –

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive, results-oriented statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Public and private support is combined through county partnerships to enable individual communities to address the unmet needs of young children and their families.

1300 Sumter Street • Concord Building, Suite 100 • Columbia, South Carolina 29201
Phone: 803-734-0479 • Fax: 803-734-1431 • Web site: www.scfirststeps.org