State of North Carolina

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 100

NORTH CAROLINA PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten program (formerly known as More at Four) is widely acknowledged to be one of the finest and most successful pre-kindergarten programs in America; and

WHEREAS, without the opportunity for appropriate development in the early years, children are in danger of falling behind their peers and remaining at a disadvantage throughout their educational careers; and

WHEREAS, studies have repeatedly shown that at-risk children who participate in the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten program (hereinafter "NC Pre-K") are better prepared to succeed in school and that these benefits are maintained for years thereafter; and

WHEREAS, all other children in the classroom also benefit from the success of at-risk children because teachers have more time to devote to helping all children learn; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that through early childhood education, states save millions of dollars that would otherwise be spent on early grade retention, special education, remedial programs, drop-out prevention, and a myriad of other costs; and

WHEREAS, I have initiated the Career and College – *Ready, Set, Go!* Initiative which sets as its goal that all students graduate ready for a career, college or technical training, and NC Pre-K is critical to preparing at-risk four year olds to achieve; and

WHEREAS, it is the constitutional right of all children to have the opportunity to obtain a sound basic education, a right repeatedly recognized by the North Carolina Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial to the futures of at-risk children and our State that we make all efforts to preserve and expand NC Pre-K; and

WHEREAS, in the 2011 Budget Bill, House Bill 200, the North Carolina General Assembly transferred NC Pre-K to the Department of Health and Human Services (hereinafter

"DHHS" or the "Department"), which operates North Carolina's acclaimed childcare subsidy and quality rating program; and

WHEREAS, because of the long history and success of NC Pre-K as implemented by the Department of Public Instruction (hereinafter "DPI"), ongoing and substantive consultation between DHHS and DPI is critical to the continued success of NC Pre-K.

NOW, THEREFORE, by the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and laws of North Carolina, **IT IS ORDERED:**

Section 1. The transfer of NC Pre-K from DPI to DHHS shall be implemented in a manner that maintains and strengthens the current academic standards and operation of NC Pre-K. In order to maintain high academic standards and the integrity of NC Pre-K, DHHS is directed to do the following, after consultation with DPI: (a) continue both the critical infrastructure and sufficient per child funding to ensure that current standards are not reduced; (b) require all lead teachers to obtain (within a prescribed timeframe) and maintain Birth-Kindergarten licensure or a pre-school add-on license; (c) determine, in consultation with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (hereinafter "ECAC"), whether NC Pre-K should operate as a distinct program within the Division of Child Development and Early Education (hereinafter "DCDEE"); and (d) continue to base the academic standards of NC Pre-K upon the following five domains of child development, which are essential to the success of pre-kindergarten programs: (1) approaches to learning, (2) cognitive development, (3) language development and communication, (4) emotional and social development, and (5) health and physical development.

Section 2. To ensure that the transition of NC Pre-K from DPI to DHHS is efficient, effective, and consistent with the goals of NC Pre-K, the Department shall work closely with the State Board of Education, DPI and the ECAC regarding the implementation of NC Pre-K and the requirements of this Executive Order. In addition, the Department shall work with the ECAC on an ongoing basis to continue coordination and collaboration for NC Pre-K and other early childhood programs in the State involving health, family strengthening, early care and education.

Section 3. Within two months from the effective date of this Order, the Department, in consultation with DPI, shall develop a plan for all eligible at-risk four year olds who apply to be accepted into NC Pre-K. The plan shall include the following: (a) identifying and removing barriers that may prevent participation by eligible at-risk four year olds, including requiring providers to waive any copayment that has the effect of preventing any eligible at-risk four year old from taking advantage of NC Pre-K; (b) continuing to identify eligible at-risk children using NC Pre-K criteria for identification of children who are at-risk; and (c) searching for unserved eligible at-risk four year olds.

Section 4. Within two months from the effective date of this Order, the Department, in consultation with DPI, shall develop a plan to ensure that staffing in the NC Pre-K program is aligned with the academic standards of NC Pre-K and is coordinated and aligned with the kindergarten through grade 3 program. The Department, likewise in consultation with DPI, shall determine whether it would improve the coordination of services delivered to at-risk children to

physically locate any of its NC Pre-K positions at DPI along with other educational pre-kindergarten efforts funded through and residing at DPI.

Section 5. Within two months from the effective date of this Order, the Department, in consultation with DPI, shall develop a detailed plan for providing financial support to local classrooms—including leveraging other financing sources—that will enable them to meet the high standards necessary to keep North Carolina's children at the forefront of learning opportunities and academic achievement and to maintain a truly diverse system of services by encouraging both public and private providers. The Department also shall consult with DPI regarding the coordination and management of the multiple funding streams that support NC Pre-K.

Section 6. Under the North Carolina Constitution, the State Board of Education possesses the responsibility for supervising and administering the free public school system. Pre-kindergarten is a critical academic program to enable at-risk children to be successful in the public schools. The State Board of Education and DPI are encouraged to continue their strong presence in early education reform, particularly with respect to strengthening the pre-kindergarten through grade 3 continuum and the necessary supports to ensure child success beyond the pre-kindergarten year.

Section 7. The alignment of the pre-kindergarten program with the kindergarten through grade 3 curriculum and other early learning initiatives at DPI is critical. To implement this order, DHHS shall consult with, and, as appropriate, enter into Memoranda of Understanding with DPI to address agency coordination and maintenance of high standards for the pre-kindergarten program.

Section 8. Public schools have provided cost-effective, high quality pre-kindergarten services, and it is important that they continue to participate as providers. The Department is directed to exercise its legal authority to remove all barriers so as to encourage participation by public schools in NC Pre-K. Pursuant to the authority granted to DHHS in the 2011 Budget Bill, House Bill 200, DHHS is directed to waive any requirement to blend private pay families with pre-kindergarten subsidized children for public school classrooms. The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall give public school classrooms access to Subsidized Early Education for Kids (SEEK), the new child care attendance reporting and payment delivery system. Pursuant to the 2011 Budget Bill, public school classrooms will have a one-year transition period to become licensed through DCDEE and may continue to operate NC Pre-K classrooms for the 2011-2012 school year. The Department shall create a transition plan to assist public schools in obtaining licensure through DCDEE. If meeting licensure standards for a public school constitutes a significant barrier to access to NC Pre-K for at-risk students, the public school may request a waiver of the licensure requirement from DCDEE.

Section 9. As funds are available, the Department shall maintain child identifiers currently in place for certain publicly-funded pre-kindergarten children and shall expand them across the early childhood system for the purpose of linking them to the DPI data system (CEDARS) in order to document longitudinal child outcomes for children served.

Section 10. In order to meet the need for highly qualified teachers in NC Pre-K classrooms, all state higher educational institutions with four-year degree programs leading to a Birth-Kindergarten teaching license and community colleges offering early childhood associate degree programs are encouraged to develop strong and effective articulation agreements that accelerate the completion time for students who transfer into Birth-Kindergarten teacher education programs. All community colleges that participate in these agreements are strongly encouraged to have early childhood degree programs which are accredited within three years by the Early Childhood Associates Degree Accreditation Program of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Section 11. This Executive Order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until rescinded.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in the City of Raleigh, this tenth day of August in the year of our Lord two thousand and eleven and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

Beverly Eaves Perdue
Governor

ATTEST:

Elaine F. Marshall
Secretary of State