

BOS Budget Hearing Testimony  
Suzanne Garrison, Chair  
SACC Parent Advisory Council  
April 11, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Suzanne Garrison and I reside in the Braddock District. I am here today to speak on behalf of the School Age Child Care Program's Parent Advisory Council. As Chair of the PAC for the past six years, I represent the nearly 11,000 families with one or more children enrolled in the SACC program, and those families who in the future will benefit from the amazing program offered by SACC.

The SACC Parent Advisory Council wishes to recognize the Boards long standing commitment to the essential services SACC provides for working families in Fairfax County. We are excited to share that because of your support, SACC was able to open its 141<sup>st</sup> SACC center this fall at White Oaks Elementary School!

SACC has been a foundational support for families for over 40 years and nothing is more important to our SACC team than children's safety and family confidence. Parents rely on SACC to provide a safe and nurturing environment while they work, and SACC has consistently provided both, and so much more, to thousands of families each year.

As a SACC parent from the Mount Vernon District recently shared, "We cannot say enough good things about our SACC teachers. They provide an enriched educational experience in a safe environment. They provide the peace of mind that allows us as parents to do our best work at our places of work. They are role models who just happen to know how to help with math homework, the history of the Statue of Liberty, and how to play chess, pinball elimination, and do ten different art techniques on any given day."

As you may know, the SACC program supports children's learning through in-depth curriculum experiences in the arts, science, technology, engineering, sports and fitness. Children establish a connection to the world around them through both local and global community service opportunities. SACC's dynamic staff are professionals committed to sharing their talents and providing creative experiences that support our children's academic and social success. With the guidance of SACC staff, children in SACC develop positive peer relationships, self-confidence and leadership skills.

We appreciate the County Executive and Board of Supervisors consistent support of programs such as SACC that positively impact children and families and ensure that children in our community have equitable opportunity to develop their full potential.

The SACC program and many other Office for Children programs which support the early care and education of children enhance self-sufficiency and productivity and contribute to the overall well-being of our community.

As the County moves forward with the development of a new strategic plan, we trust that County leaders will integrate the importance of early childhood education and school age child care program into the priority focus areas, as each is of utmost importance for children, families, and our community.

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We would like to thank the Board for their approval of FY2018 carryover funds to expand access to SACC services, to include the increase in capacity at SACC centers located throughout the County. SACC leadership and the Parent Advisory Council are also excited to be part of the County's forward-thinking plan to align the Office for Children with Neighborhood and Community Services, and the opportunities this partnership creates to strengthen the continuum of quality, affordable, equitable child and youth development programs and services (birth – 21). In addition, we believe this realignment further supports services for children with special needs and their families, promotes health and nutrition, and enhances partnerships with Fairfax County Public Schools and communities through programs and initiatives such as Middle School After School and Opportunity Neighborhoods.

My son is in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and continues to benefit from the guidance SACC is providing during his transition to Middle School and I feel at ease with his moving on. Sad that he is growing up so fast but confident he has been given more than he needs to succeed. I can't thank the SACC program enough.

Fairfax County is able to continuously thrive because of your dedication to programs that support the success of County citizens in school, in the workplace, at home and in the community. As I prepare to close, I would like to share one more comment with you from a parent in the Dranesville District. "SACC has been a Godsend to me as a single parent. Had I not had SACC, I would not have been able to maintain the required hours of my job and consequently would have lost my job. They provide an opportunity for a safe and educational place for my child before and after school. They also provide leadership and team building opportunities which adds to my child's development." As each of you know, with the SACC program, the return on investment extends past the parents who rely on it, out into the communities that immediately, and eventually, benefit from it, by helping parents now - and shaping the next generation of leaders.

The SACC PAC appreciates the Board of Supervisors' unwavering dedication to ensuring the high-quality school age child care services provided by SACC remain accessible and affordable to all Fairfax County families.

In closing, the SACC PAC commends the Board of Supervisors for your unwavering dedication to ensuring the high-quality school age child care services provided by SACC remain accessible and affordable to all Fairfax County families.

Chairman Bulova, Supervisor Hudgins, Supervisor Smyth and Supervisor Cook, the SACC Parent Advisory Council appreciates your years of dedicated service to all county residents, your leadership and your support of the SACC program. We wish you all the best in the years to come.