



# QUALITY COUNTS

Striving for High Quality Early Learning



May 1, 2018

Dear Early Care and Education Partner:

Thank you for your ongoing participation in the Quality Counts Initiative. Due to your commitment and hard work, we have improved the quality of early care and education in our community dramatically over the last ten years. The Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELC) have invested a significant amount of funds since 2007, and in return we have reduced staff turnover, improved the quality of classroom facilities and teacher-student interactions, increased the educational levels of providers; and, consequently, created more high-quality learning environments for thousands of children. Responding to lessons from our current work, feedback from Quality Counts and other providers, ongoing national research on indicators of quality and their effects on children, we are revising our early learning quality improvement system in order to align with national best practices.

With growing recognition of the importance of early learning experiences, particularly for children at-risk of school failure, there is now a larger body of research focused on how to best target interventions, resources and policy that could most directly support increased quality. We have an opportunity to refine our strategic investments based on the current child care landscape, research proven strategies, as well as the current realities of the child care market. This is inclusive of leveraging Florida's current strategic investments to improve quality for children at greatest risk of school failure through the Early Learning Performance Funding Project (ELPFP). We will continue to direct more resources to support the early learning experience of children in poverty, as research shows that children living in poverty benefit greatly from high quality early care and education, but typically attend a lower quality child care program. To that end, the Quality Counts initiative is sunsetting as we roll out a new early learning quality improvement system.

Our new quality improvement system seeks to better customize and address the financial challenges of child care providers in low income/high need neighborhoods, resulting in higher quality programming and equitable access in all neighborhoods. Funding for the achievement and maintenance of high quality standards will be available to early learning providers through a payment differential and through contracted slot payments. The child care payment differential and the value of the contracted slot will be established based on the level of quality, as measured by the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) tool. Early learning providers will have access to additional quality improvement supports including professional development, scholarships, wage supplements, child assessment supports, early childhood mental health consultation and on-site technical assistance and coaching.

Contracted slot payments will address the early learning capacity issues in our community. The Children's Trust will offer guaranteed payment for slots in high quality programs meeting specific criteria to serve children not otherwise served by the school readiness program. The new approach to early learning

quality improvement will positively impact the quality of early learning in Miami-Dade County in several ways:

- 1) children at greatest risk of school failure in low income neighborhoods will have increased access to quality early learning experiences that prepare them for early grade success;
- 2) child care providers in low income/high need areas will have financial supports and incentives to increase quality;
- 3) the Early Learning Coalition will be able to provide payment differentials to improve the access to quality child care for families in high need areas.

Thank you for your help to improve the prospects for our community's children. The collaboration among community agencies and funders, early learning providers, children and their families is one that we look forward to building for many years to come! Please plan on attending upcoming information sessions to learn more about our new system.

Sincerely,



**James R. Haj**  
President/CEO  
The Children's Trust



**Evelio Torres**  
President/CEO  
The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe