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March 15, 2017

The Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

One of the key duties of the Board of Trustees for the Family and Children's Trust (FACT) Fund of Virginia is to advise you and the Department of Social Services on issues related to child abuse and neglect and family violence.

With this charge in mind, I am writing regarding Senate Bill 1239. The original draft of this bill was intended to increase protections for all children in center-based settings exempt from child care licensing requirements. However, the revisions made during the House-Senate conference, exempting child care in religious institutions from minimum protections outlined in the original bill, are cause for significant concern. If implemented as written, this legislation could contradict its original intent and reduce safeguards for children receiving care in over 1,000 child care programs in in Virginia. Additionally, the new language included in the bill is confusing and potentially conflicts with federal funding guidelines.

FACT is dedicated to the safety all of Virginia's children. We are supportive of the measures included in this bill that require basic, best practice policies for child care staff such as fingerprint background checks and limits on caregiver/child ratio. However, given the inequality and inconsistency of the requirements in the current bill, the FACT Board of Trustees officially opposes Senate Bill 1239.

Your administration has made a clear and ongoing commitment to the health and safety of Virginia's children and families. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you in those efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Specter-Dunaway".

Lisa Specter-Dunaway, Chair

cc: The Honorable William A. Hazel, Jr.
Margaret Ross Schultze