



Position Statement: Proposed Children's Services Council

Date: March 27, 2018

The Board of Directors of the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce requests that the Leon County Commission take an important step toward the building of a diverse, healthy, and well-educated workforce for our community. The County Commission's discussion surrounding the concept of a Children's Services Council is warranted. A robust investment in the future workforce of our community is needed and now is the time to begin a process that can lead to better outcomes. In keeping with the tradition of successful, measured, and impactful initiatives in Leon County, the Chamber Board believes that a study of need and an analysis of economic impacts of a potential Children's Services Council is dutifully required at this time. Our community has shown a commitment to processes of this degree when successfully passing tax proposals such as the one-cent sales tax for infrastructure (Blueprint 2000) and the half-cent sales tax for Leon County schools.

Leon County has a rich history of meeting the demands that ensure our best future by investing in smart, efficient, and heavily vetted community initiatives. Whether we are investing in roads, schools, or economic development, the community has long demonstrated support for funding real needs if those needs are well documented and plans for how to meet them are shared with the public in advance. Those needs and plans must also pass the test of a proven citizen oversight model before we aim to pass those efforts by any ballot initiative.

There are clearly circumstances in our community today that warrant study, patient consideration, and timely debate concerning the needs of children and the future workforce for our region. A Children's Services Council may be a potential solution to long-standing problems, but before a new independent government body should be established, our community deserves a deliberate evaluation of the issues, opportunities, and objectives we should be pursuing.

Based on its guiding principles, the Board of Directors for the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce believes that new and higher taxes should be a measure of last resort when funding government programs. Should Leon County reach a place where that is necessary, the path should be clear and the answers should be heavily vetted, researched, and debated in the tradition of our very successful public schools and infrastructure initiatives. Investing in children and the future of our community is a top priority for the Chamber of Commerce, but we must do so in accordance with the processes and procedures that have yielded our greatest community successes.

The Board of Directors for the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests that the Leon County Board of County Commissioners pursue a citizen-driven, well-staffed, and focused process that is built around stakeholder engagement and aimed at how to best enhance

the future of children in Leon County. The Board further requests, consistent with its guiding principles, that any initiatives not be placed on a ballot for public vote until such a process has been completed.

Guiding Principle Referenced: #5 & #6