



## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Editorial Contact: Jeralyn Richardson, Director of Communications  
Phone: (901) 426-3041  
E-mail: Jeralyn@seeding-success.org

June 24, 2019

### **First 8 Memphis Becomes Fiscal Agent for City and County Pre-K Funds** New 501c3 to Distribute Millions to Early Childhood Programs

MEMPHIS, Tennessee – On Monday, June 24, First 8 Memphis was named the fiscal agent of City and County pre-K funds over the next three years. The announcement follows both the Shelby County Commission and Memphis City Council unanimously passing a joint ordinance to name a fiscal agent that will create an aligned, equitable strategy to scale pre-K in Shelby County. First 8 Memphis will manage the distribution of City and County funds for new and existing pre-K seats, as part of a larger strategy to secure 8,500 seats toward full need-based pre-k by 2022.

First 8 Memphis was launched by Seeding Success to invest in the early years of life, which have been identified as the most critical in propelling children toward optimal development, school readiness, and academic achievement. Research shows that children who participate in pre-K are more likely to graduate high school, earn a degree and avoid incarceration. Research also shows that accessible childcare improves workforce stability, creates jobs, and allows caregivers to return to employment or educational opportunities.

Over the past four years, a coalition of community partners has worked with local and national experts to plan and begin to implement Shelby County's first comprehensive early childhood education system that aligns critical programs and increases funding. Using an evidence based and data informed strategy, First 8 Memphis will support children and families from prenatal through age 8 using four major components — early home visitation, childcare, pre-K, and K-3rd grade literacy programs.

Students who participated in pre-K were more likely to enter school kindergarten-ready when compared to all Shelby County Schools kindergartners, with gains that continue into the third grade. First 8 Memphis's overall objectives are to prepare 90 percent of children to enter school kindergarten ready and 90 percent to read on grade-level by 2025.

"Our goal is to continue the expansion and quality improvement of pre-K, and to provide a funded seat to every 4-year old who qualifies under current eligibility criteria," said Mark Sturgis, Executive Director of Seeding Success. "We pushed for a transparent process to make sure that this work will be led effectively and that it will support existing local high-quality programs. For us, this contract is less about managing money, and more about fulfilling a critical component of the broader 0-8 plan. With the local

commitment to pre-K, we will now turn to state and national dollars to scale the other First 8 Strategies. This is only possible due to the leadership and determination of our local elected officials to fully fund pre-K.”

As the fiscal agent, First 8 will create an accountability framework around the delivery of pre-K programs, distribute recurring public and private pre-K funds, provide success metrics, maintain student data, work closely with community partners, and ensure service delivery is meeting the needs of the families served. Additionally, First 8 will present quarterly reports to a Board of Trustees, detailing the number of qualified 4-year-olds, improvements to pre-K testing outcomes, and the use of public funds.

“Our evidence-based approach ensures more equitable outcomes for Memphis’ most vulnerable children and families,” said Kathy Buckman Gibson, First 8 Memphis’ Founding Board Chair. “We are investing in the future of Memphis by funding the highest quality programs in the most underserved communities.” With 45 percent of Memphis children living in poverty, First 8’s coordinated intervention strategy for early childhood education presents one of Shelby County’s best defenses against the negative effects of poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

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### **About First 8 Memphis**

First 8 Memphis is a 501c3 devoted to serving Shelby County children 0-8 and their families through high-quality early childhood programs. Through comprehensive home visitation, childcare, pre-K, and K-3rd programs, First 8 successfully prepares children for kindergarten readiness, third-grade literacy, and beyond.

### **About Seeding Success**

Seeding Success is a Memphis Cradle to Career partnership that seeks to ensure every child has the support and resources they need to succeed cradle to career. As a leader of systems-level change, the Seeding Success partnership encourages collaboration among diverse partners, by building their capacity to make data-informed decisions that put children at the center; advocates for equity-based policies and funding to remove barriers and sustain improvements; and helps design systems to address disparities.