



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Feb. 1, 2018

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## **Research Results from 300 North Carolina Businesses Support Family-Friendly Policies**

*Family Forward NC sets goals to improve children's well-being and give businesses a competitive edge*

**Raleigh, NC** – North Carolina employers and employees agree that family-friendly policies help businesses retain talent and keep North Carolina businesses strong. The findings are based on interviews with more than 300 North Carolina employers and surveys with 300 employees from small, medium and large businesses across a wide range of industries that are the backbone of North Carolina's economy. **The findings will be released at the 2018 Institute for Emerging Issues Forum on Monday, February 5. (Details below.)**

The research was commissioned by the NC Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) as part of a new effort, Family Forward NC. Family Forward NC is a business initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep North Carolina's businesses competitive. As founding sponsor, Blue Cross NC has recently invested \$475,000 to launch the initiative as part of its mission to improve the health and well-being of its customers and communities.

Family-friendly workplaces help children build a strong foundation for future academic and career success through improved access to high-quality health care, education and family economic security. NCECF's research explores a variety of practices and policies that benefit children and families – and have a positive impact on business – including flexible schedules, lactation support and paid parental leave.

### **NC Workforce Outlook**

Employers in North Carolina face growing challenges in hiring qualified workers due to a skills gap. By 2020 – an estimated 67 percent of jobs in North Carolina will require post-secondary education. Only 45.9 percent of North Carolinians have that level of education today, according to a study on job growth by Georgetown University. Family-friendly workplaces make businesses competitive in hiring and retaining qualified workers.

### **Family Forward NC Research**

Highlights from the research findings include:

- 71 percent of North Carolina employers think that family-friendly policies have a positive impact on their organization.
- Almost half of North Carolina employers plan on offering more family-friendly benefits in the coming year.
- 94 percent of employees say that family-friendly policies help business attract and retain talent – and keep companies strong.
- Most employers and employees say that flexible work hours are an important benefit for employers to offer.

**Institute for Emerging Issues Forum**

**Family Forward NC Session**

**2:45 – 4:25 pm on February 5**

**Raleigh Convention Center  
Room 302 ABC**

**FFNC Presentation at 2:50 pm**

At the IEI Forum, Tracy Zimmerman, NCECF executive director, and Rich Neimand, Neimand Collaborative president, will explain the research findings, share evidence about positive outcomes for businesses, employees and children and provide an overview of the new Family Forward NC initiative. They will be joined by Fara Palumbo, Chief People Officer at Blue Cross NC, who will discuss the company's family-friendly policies.

**Panel Discussion at 3:40 pm**

Palumbo will also participate with other business leaders in a conversation about the challenges and opportunities of providing programs that promote healthy child development with the added benefits of improving business productivity, reducing absenteeism and attracting and keeping top talent.

**Panelists are:**

- Andrew Herdman, Vice-President Human Resources, Mayne Pharma, with offices in Greenville and Raleigh
- Napoleon Wallace, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Commerce
- Sepideh Saidi, President/CEO, Sepi Engineering and Construction, Inc. with offices in Raleigh, Wilmington and Charlotte
- Fara Palumbo, Chief People Officer at Blue Cross NC, offering health insurance for all 100 North Carolina counties

*Infographics illustrating Family Forward NC's research results are available: <http://buildthefoundation.org/FamilyForwardNC/>*

*To arrange an interview with Tracy Zimmerman, NCECF executive director, in advance or at the IEI forum, please contact Kathleen Linder at [kklinder@gmail.com](mailto:kklinder@gmail.com).*

**About Family Forward NC**

Family Forward NC is an innovative business initiative to improve children's health and well-being and keep North Carolina's businesses competitive. By increasing family-friendly workplace practices, businesses, families and our state all win. Family Forward NC is an initiative of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) with founding sponsorship from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

**About North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF)**

NCECF has a bold vision that each North Carolina child has a strong foundation for lifelong health, education and well-being supported by a premiere birth-to-eight system. NCECF promotes public understanding of and support for policies that promote children's birth-to-age-eight years for academic and lifelong success, convenes and spearheads collaboration to bridge North Carolina's birth-to-five and kindergarten-to-third grade systems, and advances policies that create a stronger NC today and tomorrow by supporting each child's birth-to-eight development. Learn more at <http://www.buildthefoundation.org/>.

