**Letter from the Founder and President**

In 2018, I retired from an active career as a serial software and tech company entrepreneur. My wife and I are now dedicated to leveling the playing field for children by reducing the opportunity and achievement gaps that plague so many of our economically-disadvantaged families. Our own children are now starting their careers and families and we feel that the children of families with fewer resources deserve the same chance.

While we launched the foundation soon after my retirement, we look at early 2020 as the true starting point of our work, which began with the hiring of our first executive director. While this timed closely with the onset of COVID-19, we were still able to launch a multi-tiered grantmaking approach that both assisted high-impact non-profit organizations with operating and excelling during the pandemic while also developing strong, mission-focused, multi-year program partnerships.

This initial three-year strategy ended in the spring of 2024. The plan was based on two objectives: 1) increase access to early childcare and out-of-school time programming for low-income families and 2) improving the quality of these programs. Ultimately, both objectives align within our strategic framework of building collective impact models in our communities using the Campaign for Grade Level Reading as that structure. Our central theory of change is the inflection point of third grade literacy and the success ladder resulting from being on-grade level. The greatest social and financial return is linked to positive interventions from birth to five years old. By focusing on these first five years, children arriving in public kindergarten meeting readiness benchmarks are more likely to be – if combined with consistent public school attendance and after-school/summer participation – on grade level reading by the third grade. Children on-grade level reading by third grade are statistically much more likely to not drop out, graduate high school on time, be college or career ready, and have a higher future wage earning potential. Ultimately, higher earnings produce more active, engaged citizens as adults and break the generational cycle of poverty.

After these three years of operating the foundation, while we can also point to positive outcomes in the majority of our targeted programs, I also am proud to share several systems-level improvements correlated strongly to our work:

* Facilitated the introduction of Campaign for Grade Level Reading collective impact models in Dorchester County, MD and Winchester, VA
* Partnered as a founding member of the Virginia Early Childhood Funder’s Collaborative, building a new source of grantmaking within the Commonwealth of Virginia
* Launched sustainable, now-publicly funded pre-kindergarten classrooms for 3-year-olds in Dorchester County, MD and Winchester, VA
* Funded the redesign of the MentorWorks in-school mentorship program impacting thousands of students in Fairfax County Public Schools, VA
* Funded the expansion and scale-up of a birth to three-year-old developmental screening program in Fairfax County, VA impacting thousands of children and families
* Assisted with the expansion to, and the establishment of, the Boys and Girls Club in Dorchester County, MD
* Helped support the Handley Regional Library System begin the process of Family Place Library accreditation, which will support the library’s push to be a greater resource for birth to 5 families across the entire Northern Shenandoah Valley region

We continue to believe that the way forward must include gaining community commitment on four key assurances: prioritize healthy children, be intentional about early academic and social emotional well-being, emphasize the need to talk/read/play with our children, and recognize we need to address summer learning loss.

We are now launching our next three-year strategic plan, entitled INCREASE IMPACT. 2027. We believe we have made much progress in increasing access to quality early childhood education. Thus, while we still plan to build one program around that goal in Dorchester County, MD, much of our strategy will shift towards emphasizing increased investment in the two Campaigns for Grade Level Reading while also placing further capital into improving the quality of both early childcare and out-of-school time programming. We will also continue to seek ways to scale our work through funding collaboratives and by having a stronger voice and agency through richer involvement in systems-building work across our region. Our foundation has also transitioned from a private non-operating foundation to a private operating foundation, better reflecting our deep engagement and service-oriented approach to grantmaking.

We are laser-focused on our mission, confident in the approach, and committed to engaging organizations willing to help find creative and nimble approaches to solving equity challenges that may be hindering our youngest and most vulnerable populations. As we work towards 2027, we do so with the intent of building stronger, more engaged communities. We hope that you will join us!



John L. Wyatt
Founder and President

John & Janice Wyatt Foundation