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CONTACT:

Megan Streng
Communications Director
616.528.4552 | 616.450.8521
mstreng@firststepskent.org



Supported by the Kent County Ready by Five Millage

KENT COUNTY CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD MILLAGE

Local programs awarded another \$7.8 million in Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage

(Grand Rapids, Mich., October 27, 2022)—More families in Kent County are able to receive services that improve the health and school readiness of young children thanks to a new round of Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funding that was approved today.

Ready by Five now supports more than 40 programs aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of expectant parents and the development and early learning of children through age five across Kent County. New this year is training and education for the nearly 150 early childhood professionals whose positions are supported by Ready by Five funds. This will ensure the workforce stays up to date on early childhood best practices, trauma-informed approaches, and more. Also included this round are programs that benefit parents with specific needs in Kent County, including those in the foster care system and families new to the United States.

The allocations announced today came from a recommendation by the Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board, which is comprised of parents, an early childhood expert, and Kent County Commissioners.

"The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage is making a tremendous impact on expecting parents and young children in Kent County," said **Jennifer Headley-Nordman**, President of First Steps Kent. "Each year we are seeing significant increases in the number of individuals benefiting by these local efforts."

"Early childhood learning is the key to success for children," said Kent County Administrator **Al Vanderberg**. "The funding provided through the millage allows community organizations to deliver programs and services families need to build a strong foundation for their child's school readiness."

Kent County voters approved the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage on November 6, 2018. The six-year millage generates between \$6-7 million each year of dedicated funding for community-based early childhood programs, ensuring children and their families have access to vital services. All millage dollars go through an independent audit and are reported to the Kent County Board of Commissioners each year to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely and transparently. First Steps Kent administers the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage.

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The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage provides dedicated and sustainable funding for programs that improve the health, school readiness, and well-being of children under age five in Kent County. First Steps Kent is the administrator of the Ready by Five millage funds. First Steps Kent is an independent non-profit that works to strengthen and coordinate the system of early childhood services through research and innovation. First Steps Kent is leading a community-wide effort to develop a system of support for children ages 0-5 (and their families) that ensures every young child in Kent County will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.