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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Parents Asked to Give Insight on Childcare Needs

KNOXVILLE, IA (September 4, 2018)—

The Marion County Development Commission (MCDC) and the Pella Area Community & Economic (PACE) Alliance are asking parents, legal guardians and future parents to give insight on both their current and future childcare needs in Marion County. As the number of childcare providers in Iowa and Marion County trend downward, and additional housing units are brought online (bringing more families to the area), careful and strategic planning is of utmost importance for the future of our most valuable resources – our children.

To better understand current needs, MCDC and PACE Alliance along with several community partners are working with First Children’s Finance to study the supply and demand for child care in Marion County. A component of the research is to gain input from parents that live or work in Marion County, that have children age 12 or younger. Through an online survey, parents have an opportunity to share any challenges they may have experienced in finding child care, their preferences for child care, how child care affects their job, or if child care is keeping them from working.

“Our children are one of our most valuable resources for the future of Marion County. When meeting with prime employers in 2017, child care was rated as one of the lowest assets in our communities. Most felt our current providers do a great job, but that we were lacking in number of spaces and certain types of child care,” explained Carla Eysink, MCDC Executive Director. “The study will provide us not only data, but a plan to address both opportunities and issues.”

Local child care providers and employers will also be asked to give input. A child care provider survey will help inventory the child care options available in the community and allow providers to give their perspective on the current supply of child care and how they feel the community can support child care in the future. Employers will be asked how the supply of child care affects their employees and job candidates. All three surveys can be accessed through the pella.org or marioncountyiowa.com websites until October 15.

After the market research is complete, First Children’s Finance will facilitate a process that focuses on addressing Marion County’s child care needs, as identified through the surveys and other market research. This process will include facilitated meetings to identify priorities, develop goals with detailed

strategies, and specific activities that can be carried out by the community.

“Removing barriers to childcare is critical for working parents. As we position our area for growth, ensuring we have not only the capacity for childcare, but the type of childcare desired is of utmost importance. Parent feedback will play a key role in shaping the childcare landscape in Marion County,” said Karen Eischen, PACE Alliance Executive Director.

For more information about this project, contact Carla Eysink, Marion County Development Commission at 641-828-2257 or ceysink@co.marion.ia.us.

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