

Dear Representative, Balkcom,

I am writing to urge your support for Hands On! Children's Museum as you and other members of the state legislature consider providing one-time financial support for the development of the future Hands On! Science Center in downtown Hendersonville.

For nearly twenty years, Hands On! has been a beacon of educational enrichment for children in our community. The museum fosters a love for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects in a fun and interactive way. The future Science Center project will provide a completely new learning experience for older youth ages twelve and up.

The Science Center will serve as a pipeline to support the Made in Henderson County Apprenticeship Program. The interactive Science Center will feature learning experiences that directly reflect STEM industries within Henderson County and Western North Carolina.

Henderson County and Western North Carolina are home to a growing number of high-paying STEM careers. There are numerous local career pathways through vocational programs, certifications, associate degrees, and apprenticeships—many of which local youth are not aware of. By raising awareness of STEM career opportunities, particularly in the areas of Advanced Manufacturing and Agriculture, the Science Center will serve as a catalyst for inspiring older youth to pursue rewarding STEM careers without having to leave their community.

The future Science Center will support the Made in Henderson County Apprenticeship Program in partnership with the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development, Henderson County Schools, and Blue Ridge Community College.

Thank you for your service to our state and for considering financial support through the state legislature for the Hands On! Science Center Project. Hands On! Children's Museum is an important resource for our children and older youth, and support from the State of North Carolina will be instrumental to the success of this project.