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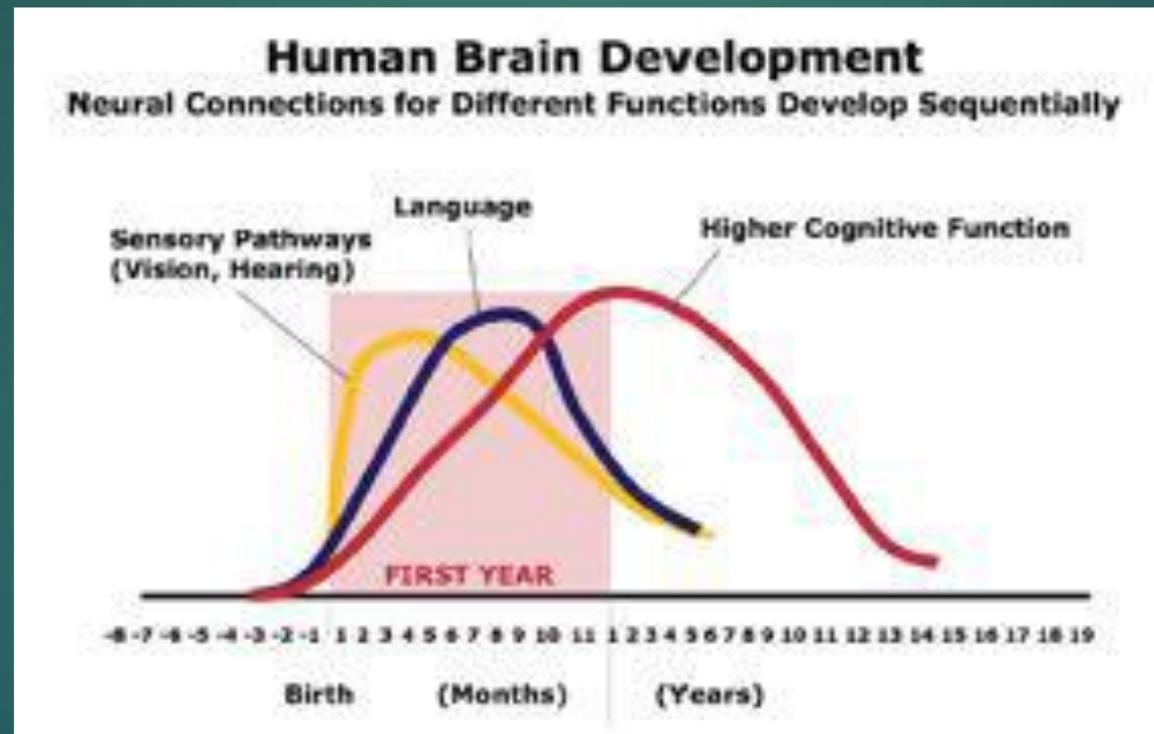
*A Window of Opportunity to
Change the Trajectory of Houston's
Future*

Quianta Moore, MD, JD
Huffington Fellow in Child Health Policy,
Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy
Adjunct Assistant Professor in Pediatrics,
Baylor College of Medicine

Why is early childhood important?

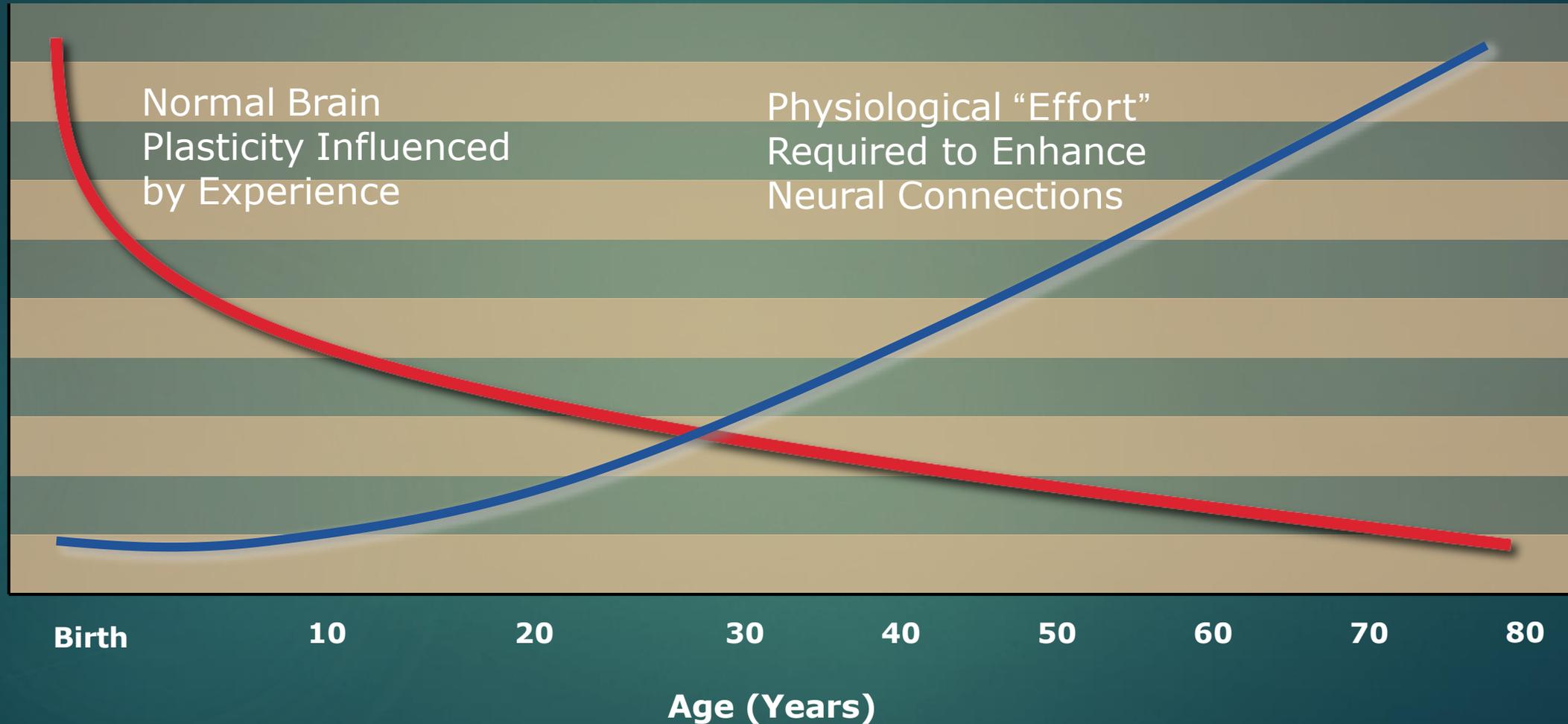
- ▶ Sensitive window of development
 - ▶ Brains built rapidly
 - ▶ Combination of genes and environment determine nature and quality of those neuronal connections
 - ▶ Birth to age 4, brain most susceptible to significant and irreversible modifications in neuronal connections

Neuronal connections formed early in life



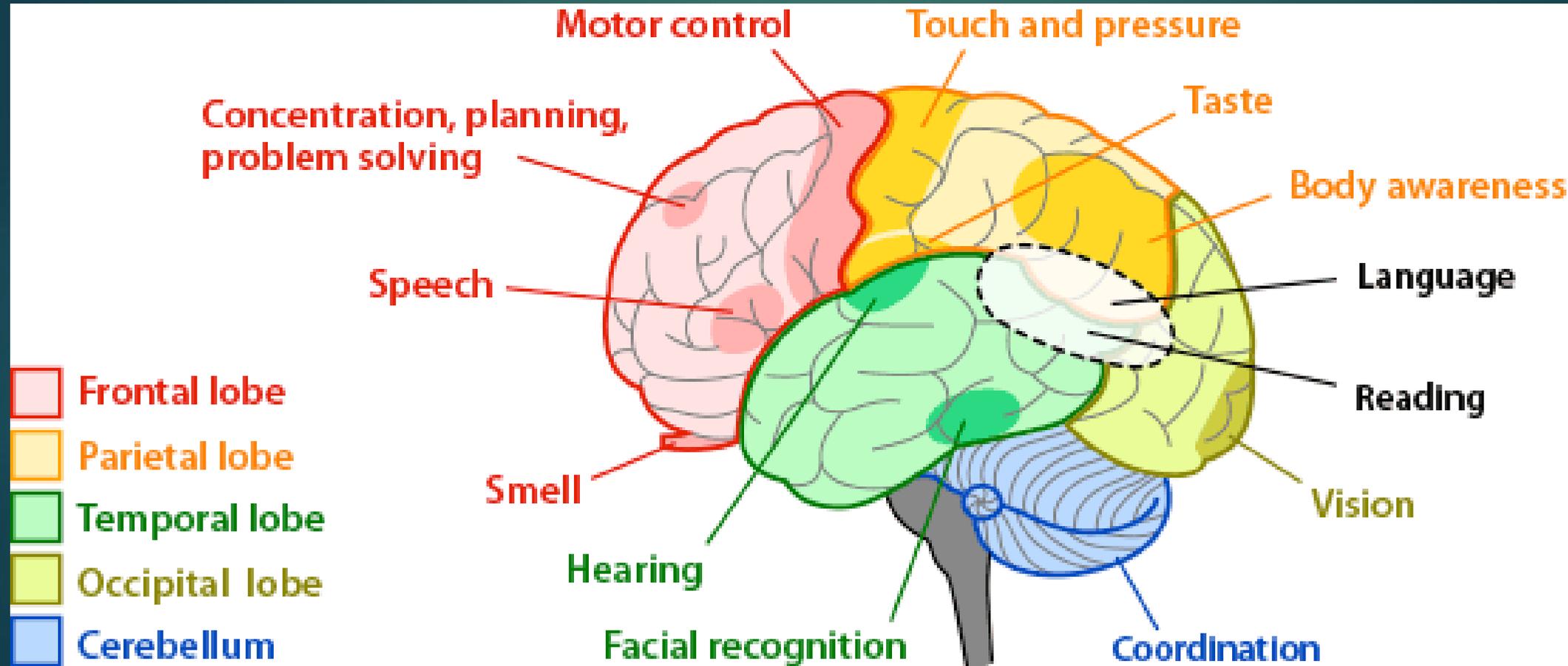
Source: Nelson (2000) in Shonkoff & Phillips (eds), 2000

The Brain's Ability to Change Decreases Over Time But It's Never Too Late!



Source: Levitt, P. (2009)

The BRAIN is responsible for everything!



Why is early childhood important?

Our brains are mostly formed by the age of 5

- ▶ Responsible for all human function and performance
 - ▶ Academic success
 - ▶ Decision-making
 - ▶ Behavior control
 - ▶ Emotional/relational health
 - ▶ Mental health
 - ▶ Physical health

Why is early childhood important?

Poor/unhealthy brain development leads to:

- ▶ Struggling/failing schools
- ▶ High unemployment rate
- ▶ High crime/high incarceration rates
- ▶ Higher healthcare costs

Translate to...

- ▶ Disinvestment in neighborhoods and cities
- ▶ Widening of inequities and increase in poverty

Pathways that can negatively affect brain development

▶ Prenatal

- ▶ Nutrition
- ▶ Maternal Stress/Depression

▶ Social

- ▶ Parent-child relationship
 - ▶ Maternal Stress/Depression
 - ▶ Parenting (discipline, monitoring, warmth, acceptance, responsiveness, etc.)
 - ▶ Serve and return
- ▶ Adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress

Pathways that affect brain development

▶ **Environmental**

- ▶ Lead Poisoning
- ▶ Crowding/housing/chaos
- ▶ Nutrition



MODEL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

POSITIVE

- A: supportive relationships
- B: economic security
- C: adequate healthcare
- D: adequate nutrition



POSITIVE

- A: loving relationships
- B: adequate prenatal and child care
- C: adequate nutrition
- D: safe and stimulating environments



PARENT



CHILD

- A: domestic violence
- B: maternal stress/depression
- C: poverty
- D: lack of social support

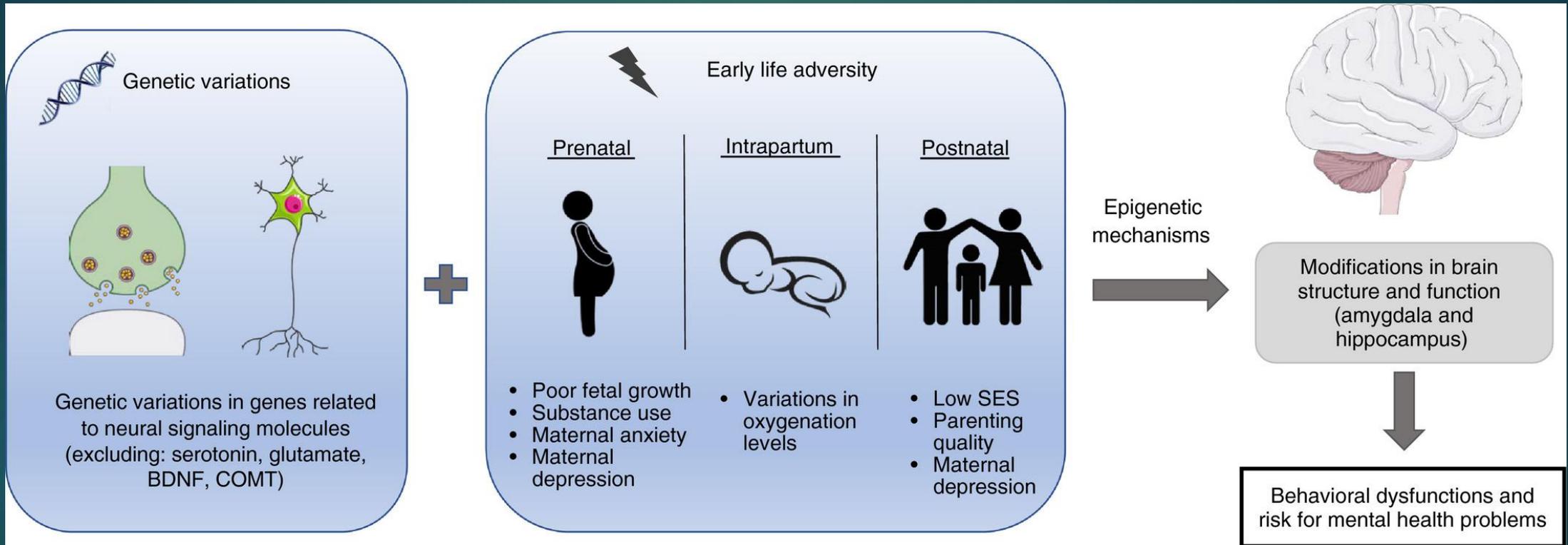


- A: poor housing
- B: adverse childhood experiences
- C: insecure parent attachments
- D: lack of stimulation

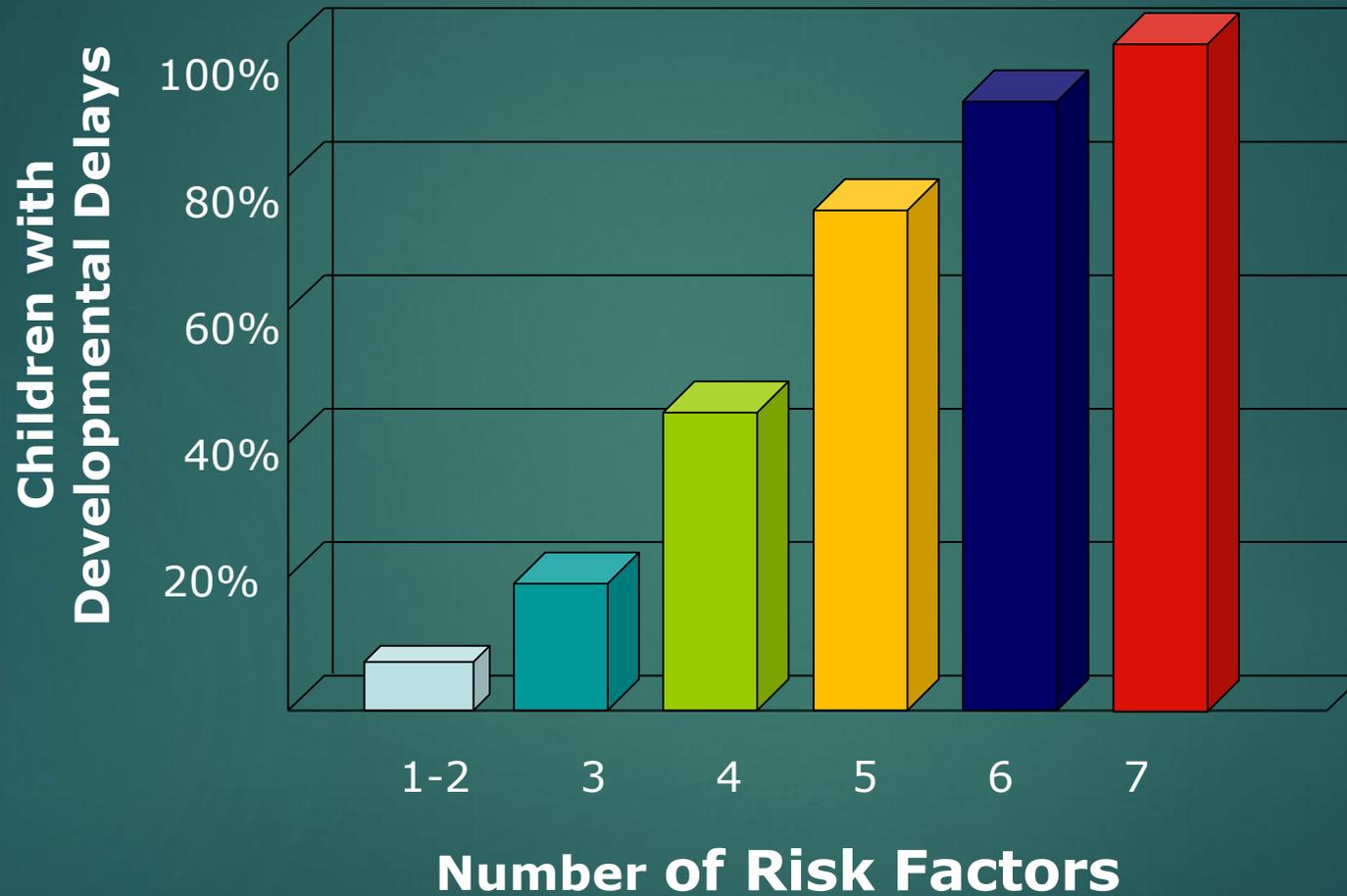


NEGATIVE

NEGATIVE



Significant Adversity Impairs Development in the First Three Years



Source: Barth, et al. (2008)

Resilience Can Be Strengthened by Supportive Relationships and Skill-Building

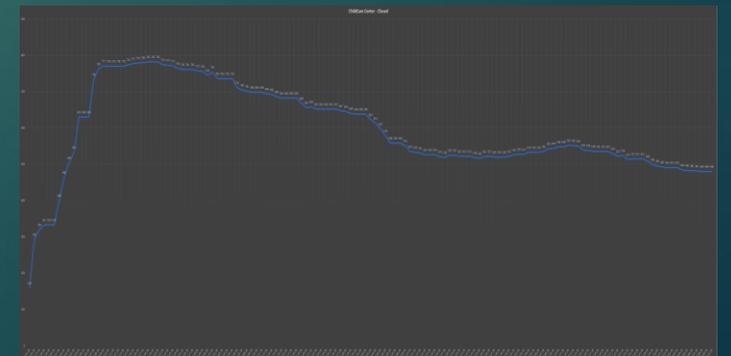


Houston's Children

- ▶ Over 240,000 children under the age of 5 live in the City of Houston; 80,000 live below the poverty line.
 - ▶ 75% of those in poverty are African-American or Latino
- ▶ Knowledge gap between low-income children and higher-income children emerges by age 3.
- ▶ HISD is comprised of 77% economically disadvantaged children

Impact of the pandemic...

- ▶ Increased job loss and housing instability
- ▶ Childcare center closures and limited access
- ▶ Potential for long-lasting impacts on outcomes



American Rescue Plan

- ▶ \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill; \$615 million to the City of Houston
 - ▶ Implications for the prenatal to-3 period
 - ▶ Expands eligibility for programs (WIC, SNAP)
 - ▶ Increases the value and refundability of tax credits for families
 - ▶ Provides substantial funding increases to public programs serving families and caregivers
- ▶ Invests \$15 billion in new funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and a \$24 billion stabilization fund for child care providers
 - ▶ Will expand child care assistance to support families and providers, including supporting the child care needs of essential workers.
 - ▶ The \$24 billion includes child care providers who haven't previously received funding through the CCDBG. These funds are to be administered by state led agencies, and can support providers who are currently operation or closed due to COVID related reasons.

American Rescue Plan

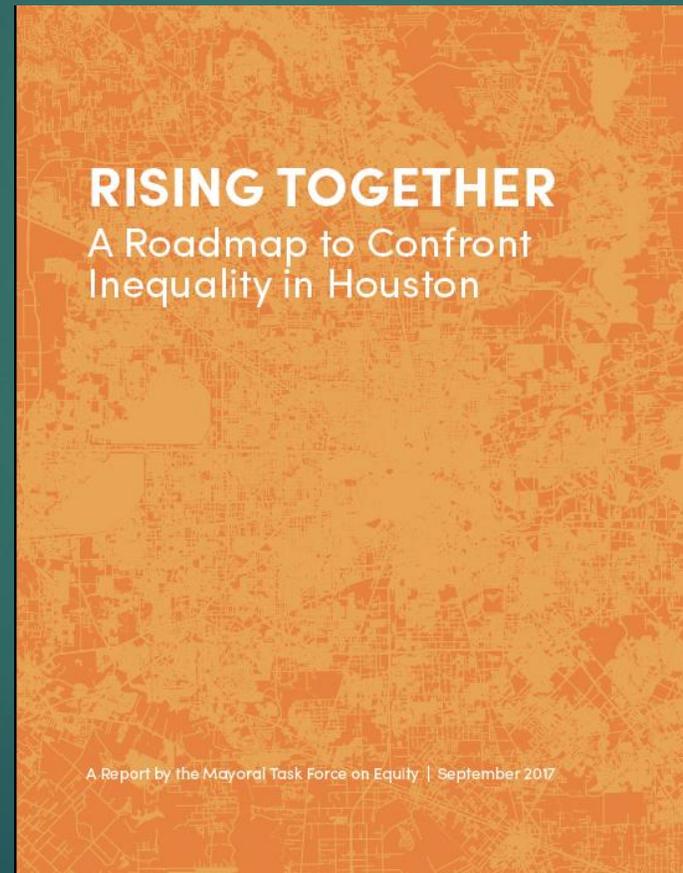
- ▶ \$150 million in supplemental funding to home visiting programs
 - ▶ Home visiting workers provide essential services and information to families with limited access to economic resources, this has the opportunity to further support those efforts by providing the technology needed, diapers, wipes, and food.
- ▶ \$1 billion in additional funding for Head Start and Early Head Start
 - ▶ Could partner with school districts and non-profits
 - ▶ School districts will also have access to 26 billion to address and remediate learning loss
- ▶ \$800 million to identify and provide wraparound services or educational assistance to homeless children and youth

Proposed/Possible Goals

Every child has access to a stimulating,
engaging environment

- ▶ Two-generation interventions
 - ▶ Housing
 - ▶ Economic security
 - ▶ **Quality childcare from birth to school age**
 - ▶ **Parenting programs**

Mayor's Task Force on Equity



Mayor's Task Force on Equity Report Recommendations

A City Where Every Child Has a Chance



Recommendation: The City of Houston should pilot a scalable early childhood education program that could reach up to 40,000 children by 2025. Such a program would ensure that the next generation of Houstonians would have the potential to perform well in school and become productive members of our economy, and that parents could afford to attend school or return to work.

We propose the Early Childhood Education Pilot, which would run for three years in one or more of the neighborhoods selected for the Complete Communities initiative. The pilot would provide scholarships for 1,500 economically disadvantaged children ages 0–4 in the targeted neighborhood and comprehensively track metrics to demonstrate its impact. If successful, this pilot should be expanded in a rapid and sustainable manner to the tens of thousands of economically disadvantaged children across the city.

Evidence-based components

I. Stimulating, engagement environment

Research suggests there are three key prongs to successful programs:

- Access (increase number of full-day seats and demand for them)
- Quality (including education benchmarks and teachers who earn livable wage)
- Financially-viable centers (full enrollment, full fee collection, revenues cover per-child cost)

II. Parenting/caregiver supports

- Living wage for childcare workers
- Parenting/home visiting component

Action Items/Next Steps

- ▶ A renewed commitment and prioritization of the City to ensuring an equitable future for all children in Houston.
 - ▶ Examining existing City practices and policies to ensure they support a culture of early childhood development for City employees and impacted Houstonians
- ▶ Mayor's Task Force: Implementation of ECD
 - ▶ Paid City staff dedicated to coordination of implementation of initiative
 - ▶ Resources allocated to support coordination activities
 - ▶ Public support from Mayor and City Council for a City-wide ECD initiative