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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Georgia celebrates Inclusive Early Learning Week

*Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs to visit Georgia Child Care Programs with
Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsements*

ATLANTA, Ga., (September 2, 2016) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has designated September 19-24, 2016 as Inclusive Early Learning Week in Georgia. The purpose of this special week is to increase community awareness of and advocacy for inclusion, to celebrate child care programs’ successes in creating inclusive classrooms, and to strengthen supports that promote inclusive practices in all early learning environments across Georgia.

Early childhood inclusion means that every infant and young child and his or her family has the right...regardless of ability...to participate in activities as full members of families, classrooms, communities, and society. (NAEYC/DEC, 2009)

“Georgia is implementing innovative practices in our work on behalf of young children with disabilities and their families,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “During this exciting week we will engage child care providers in advocacy, celebration, information and reflection as we strengthen the supports needed to ensure that all of Georgia’s children benefit from high quality learning experiences.”

As part of the celebration, Commissioner Jacobs and DECAL's official mascot, CALi, will visit Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia that have earned the QR Inclusion Endorsement. They will visit Central Georgia Technical College Child Development Center in Warner Robins on **Monday, September 19, 2016**, at 10:00 AM; Appletree-ABC Preschool in Alpharetta on **Tuesday, September 20, 2016**, at 9:30 AM; and D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Learning Center in Lawrenceville at 9:30 AM and Lifespan Montessori in Athens at 11:30 AM on **Wednesday, September 21, 2016**.

During each visit, Commissioner Jacobs will read *CALi Is a Super Friend*, a social story that describes ways children can be a Super Friend to each another.

Inclusive Early Learning Week concludes **Friday and Saturday, September 23-24, 2016**, at the annual conference of the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) being held at Gwinnett Technical College in Lawrenceville. Providers will be invited to take the "Person First" Pledge, have a photo taken with CALi in the photo booth, and attend several sessions on inclusion with a featured session by special guest Stacey Ramirez, Georgia Executive Director for The Arc, the largest national organization of and for people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families.

During Inclusive Early Learning Week, all Georgia child care programs will receive an electronic Provider Celebration Kit linked to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) that provides ways providers can engage children, staff, and families throughout the week. The kit will be e-mailed to child care providers and will be posted at www.dec.state.ga.us.

Quality Rated is Georgia's initiative to increase families' access to high-quality child care programs and enhance the quality of child care across the state. A child care program seeking the QR Inclusion Endorsement undergoes a rigorous assessment using the Inclusive Classroom Profile, an observation instrument that assesses the quality of provisions and daily practices that support the developmental needs of children with disabilities in early childhood settings. When the child care program scores above a certain level on the assessment, the program receives the Inclusion Endorsement.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages *Quality Rated*, Georgia's community powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.