

United Way of Pennsylvania

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May 24, 2016

Dear Members of the PA General Assembly:

Investments in high-quality pre-k have a significant return on investment for our children, schools and communities. That is why the United Way of Pennsylvania and local United Ways across the commonwealth have long made early learning and school readiness priority issues, joining with civic leaders and other philanthropic organizations to promote the benefits of high-quality pre-k and make it available to more children.

Yet despite the many proven benefits of high-quality pre-k, most of Pennsylvania's 3- and 4-year-olds lack access to this once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity, including tens of thousands of children at risk of academic failure. In fact, about 70 percent of Pennsylvania's 175,000 at-risk preschoolers miss out on publicly funded, high-quality pre-k. Unfortunately, philanthropic efforts like ours can only go so far toward increasing pre-k access.

Policymakers on both sides of the aisle increasingly recognize that high-quality pre-k and other early learning investments pay off, but Pennsylvania is failing to fully capitalize on the many benefits these programs provide. We can address this through stronger state investments in high-quality pre-k.

We need the commonwealth to step up its efforts to fund high-quality pre-k so we can reach those children who are missing out, particularly those at risk of academic failure. On behalf of the United Way of Pennsylvania and our local United Ways across Pennsylvania, we support the Pre-K for PA campaign's request to increase state pre-k funding by \$90 million for fiscal 2016-17 and urge lawmakers to make this a clear priority in the coming budget deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request.

Sincerely,

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President, United Way of Pennsylvania

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Champion Law, LLC
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