

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Pre-K Kids Adorn PA Capitol Christmas Tree with 1,500 Hand-crafted Ornaments, Join Gov. Wolf at Tree-Lighting Ceremony**

***Advocacy Campaign seeks funding for 10,000 kids in FY 2018-19 budget***

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**HARRISBURG** (December 8, 2017)— The Pre-K for PA campaign organized the creation of 1,500 original ornaments crafted by pre-k students from all corners of the commonwealth this month used to decorate the Pennsylvania Capitol Christmas tree.  Today, five dozen pre-k students joined Governor Wolf at the tree lighting ceremony to celebrate the start of the holiday season in the Capitol.

"Seeing the hundreds of ornaments crafted by the creative hands of pre-k students is a reminder of the power of pre-k in creating lifelong learning opportunities,” said Governor Tom Wolf. “Over the past three years, Pennsylvania has increased the number of children in pre-kindergarten and I look forward to further expanding those opportunities in the future.”

These fortunate students represent a handful of the thousands of students who have benefitted thanks to the leadership of Gov. Wolf and the Pennsylvania Legislature’s continued commitment to pre-k expansion.  This past year, the Pennsylvania budget gave 3,600 more children the opportunity to attend a high-quality pre-k program.

In 2018, Pre-K for PA will be advocating an $85 million increase in pre-k spending as part of the FY 2018-19 PA budget.

Nearly 113,000 at-risk three- and four-year-olds across the commonwealth still do not have access to high-quality pre-k. With roughly 64% of eligible preschool-age children unable to access high-quality pre-k, Pennsylvania can and must do better.

Governor Wolf along with Republican and Democrat legislators deserve a tremendous amount of credit for prioritizing the commonwealth’s three- and four-year-olds by investing millions of dollars in high-quality pre-k to serve thousands more of the commonwealth’s youngest learners during several difficult budget cycles, but we are still lagging behind as neighboring states invest at a swifter pace.

Since the campaign’s inception four years ago, Pre-K for PA has worked side-by-side with the legislature and governor, and we are tremendously pleased that both sides of the aisle and leaders across the Capitol understand that an expanded investment in high-quality pre-k programs is an effective long-term strategy to ensure that our next generation is ready to succeed.

In 2018, we will advocate for an investment of $85 million to serve 10,000 more kids across PA. No child gets a do-over and every dollar invested provides access to a high-quality pre-k experience, which reaps significant cost savings in the future in the form of less public spending on special education, social welfare programs, and criminal justice.

EDITOR’S NOTE: A list of pre-k centers participating in the creation of Capitol Christmas tree ornaments can be found at [www.prekforpa.org/tree](http://www.prekforpa.org/tree).

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*Pre-K for PA is**an issue campaign supported by individuals and organizations across Pennsylvania who believe that investing in our children is the right choice and an urgent necessity. Its goal is that by 2022, every at-risk child will have access to a high-quality pre-kindergarten program and middle-income families will more easily afford these services for their children.  For more information visit www.prekforpa.org.*