

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**Tree-Lighting Ceremony**

***Advocacy campaign seeks to expand pre-k access to all eligible PA children***

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**HARRISBURG** (December 6, 2018)— The Pre-K for PA campaign organized the creation of thousands of original ornaments crafted by pre-k students from all corners of the commonwealth this month to help decorate the Pennsylvania Capitol Christmas tree.  Today, dozens of pre-k students joined Governor Wolf at the tree lighting ceremony to celebrate the start of the holiday season in the Capitol.

“Seeing young children enjoy the magic of the holidays is a reminder of their optimism and potential,” said Governor Wolf. “Hand-crafted ornaments created by our youngest Pennsylvanians will adorn family Christmas trees across our commonwealth, demonstrating the importance of pre-k and lifelong learning.”

“The fortunate students here today represent a handful of the thousands of students who have benefitted thanks to the leadership of Gov. Wolf, and members of the General Assembly on both sides of the aisle, from continued commitment to pre-k expansion,” said Joan Benso, President & CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, a principal partner of Pre-K for PA. “This past year, the Pennsylvania budget gave about 2,600 more children the opportunity to attend a high-quality pre-k program. This year our holiday wish is for Pennsylvania to make another serious investment as there are still 106,000 children across the commonwealth missing out on high-quality, publicly funded pre-k.”

Today only 39 percent of eligible children in Pennsylvania attend high-quality, publicly funded pre-k, leaving more than 106,000 children without the benefit of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, due to limited state funding.

A poll commissioned by the Pre-K for PA campaign done by Harper Polling in May showed 75 percent of likely voters support increasing funding to expand access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten, while 94 percent of voters believe that early education is important.

A large body of research shows that children who attend high-quality preschool:

* Enter kindergarten with stronger literacy, language, math and social/emotional skills;
* Are less likely to need special education services, less likely to repeat grades, and more likely to graduate and enroll in college;
* Over a lifetime, these young learners will see stronger employment opportunities and increased earning potential; and,
* Are less likely to commit juvenile and adult crimes.

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.*