

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**75 Percent of Pennsylvania Voters Favor**

**Increasing Pre-K Funding**

***Strong Consensus: 94% Say Early Childhood Education Important for PA***

**Harrisburg, PA (June 7, 2018)** – As Pennsylvania state legislators return to Harrisburg to negotiate a final state budget, a new poll commissioned by the Pre-K for PA Campaign and conducted by Harrisburg-based Harper Polling **shows 75 percent of likely voters support increasing funding to expand access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten.** The numbers have grown since a 2013 Pre-K for PA commissioned poll conducted by Lake Research Partners/Bellwether Research and Consulting had 63% of likely voters indicating that they favored increasing funding to ensure access to pre-k for all Pennsylvania kids.

“There is strong consensus among Pennsylvania voters [94 percent] that think early childhood education is important for the children of the commonwealth,” said Brock McCleary, President, Harper Polling. “Furthermore, a strong plurality of support for expanded funding is realized across all demographics, regions and registration.”

Nearly two-thirds of likely Pennsylvania voters polled by Harper from May 22-23 **also said that they would support a tax increase to expand pre-k access.** Sixty-four percent of Pennsylvanians said they would pay an extra $50 in taxes to fund pre-k, which would equal a .01 increase in PIT (personal income tax) for the average Pennsylvania taxpayer. This number has also grown since the 2013 poll, when only 56 percent of voters polled said they were willing to pay higher taxes to support pre-k investments.

**“Pennsylvanians value pre-k education for its proven benefits to each child fortunate enough to attend a high-quality pre-k, and they’re willing to dig a little deeper into their own pockets to support expanded access for kids across the commonwealth,”** said Joan Benso, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, a founding partner of Pre-K for PA. “Pennsylvania prospers when children succeed and pre-k is a key element in each child’s success.”

According to the new Harper poll results, **every single voting demographic in the state favors expanded access to pre-k by at least a two-to-one margin.** Seniors favor it by more than a three-to-one margin. Conservatives are for expanded access at a rate of two-to-one. **More than 65 percent of likely voters in Southcentral PA, a conservative part of the state, are willing to pay $50 more per year to support state pre-k expansion.**

“**No child should be missing out when nearly all residents agree,”** said Jodi Askins, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC). “When it comes to the benefits of high-quality pre-k, 94 percent of Pennsylvanians agree that it is necessary for children to learn the appropriate behaviors and social skills to succeed in school. It’s time to fully fund pre-k.”

**The additional $40 million in the 2018-19 budget proposal, if fully funded, will expand access to publicly funded pre-k to more than 4,400 new students.** Currently more than 106,000 eligible children do not have access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-k due to limited state funding.

Since the inception of the Pre-K for PA Campaign, the commonwealth’s investment in publicly funded pre-k has increased by $100 million, but lags far behind many neighboring states. **Today, Pennsylvania ranks 18th of the 30 states investing in high-quality, publicly funded pre-k.** New Jersey is spending five times more per capita than PA and even West Virginia is leaps ahead of PA—it has had universal access for pre-k aged kids since 2012.

For more poll results, please visit www.prekforpa.com/poll.

*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 vision is that every 3- and 4-year-old in Pennsylvania will have access to high-quality pre-k. For more information visit www.prekforpa.org.*

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