

New PPC Report Finds High-quality Pre-k Benefits Only 1 in 6 Young Learners *Pennsylvania Can See Greater Impact Through Increased Investments*

(HARRISBURG, PA) Feb. 19, 2014 – Only about 18 percent of Pennsylvania’s 3- and 4-year-olds - or 1 in 6 children - are able to access high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs, despite the proven benefits and growing public support for these programs, according to a new report from Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC).

This lack of access to high-quality pre-k not only means missed learning opportunities for young children, it also results in additional long-term costs for Pennsylvania’s taxpayers. These issues can be addressed through stronger public investments in high-quality pre-k, PPC President and CEO Joan Benso said.

“The sooner high-quality pre-k is made available to more Pennsylvania children, the sooner we can see the increased benefits to our children, our communities and the commonwealth,” Benso said. “Investing in our young learners is a smart and necessary step toward building a stronger Pennsylvania.”

PPC’s report, “*A Smart Choice for a Solid Start: The Case for Pre-k in PA*,” shows nearly a quarter of a million 3- and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania lack access to high-quality pre-k because their families cannot find or afford such programs.

The report details the proven benefits of high-quality pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds, including stronger academic and social skills in kindergarten and later grades, reduced costs for special education services, and an increased likelihood of high school graduation and better employment opportunities.

These are among the reasons high-quality pre-k is seeing growing support among elected leaders from both major parties, business leaders, and military and law enforcement officials in Pennsylvania and across the country.

Pennsylvania taxpayers also express strong support for investing more public funds in high-quality pre-k. The report cites a recent poll of likely voters that shows 63 percent of Pennsylvanians support increased funding for pre-k and 58 percent say they favor increasing pre-k funding even if it increased their taxes.

“Pennsylvanians want to see their tax dollars invested wisely in areas that benefit all of us, and they increasingly recognize that high-quality pre-k is one of those areas,” Benso said. “It has a ripple effect throughout a child’s life and throughout a child’s community.”

Despite strong voter support, Pennsylvania’s investments in high-quality pre-k have not significantly increased in recent years, even as several other states are making or moving toward stronger investments. Most of Pennsylvania’s neighboring states – including Maryland,

New Jersey, New York and West Virginia – have higher rates of pre-k participation among 4-year-olds, underscoring the need for Pennsylvania to do more.

To elevate the discussion about stronger public investments in high-quality pre-k, PPC recently helped launch a statewide campaign called “Pre-K for PA: All Children Ready to Succeed.” The campaign’s goal is to ensure every 3- and 4-year-old in Pennsylvania has access to high-quality pre-k and enters kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. Visit prekforpa.org to learn more.

PPC’s report, along with county-level statistics on access to high-quality pre-k, can be found at papartnerships.org/prekinpa.

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