



For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

Carey Learnard (Pre-K for PA) 215-260-5215

Statewide Coalition Kicks off Effort to Expand Access to High-Quality Pre-k
'Pre-K for PA' campaign seeks to ensure all children enter school ready to learn

(Philadelphia, Pa.) Jan. 23, 2014 – Kicking off a campaign to advocate for greater investment in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, a statewide coalition of non-profit organizations today launched "**Pre-K for PA: All Children Ready to Succeed**" to ensure that every 3- and 4-year old in Pennsylvania has the opportunity to access these initiatives.

“The public funds currently available for pre-k in Pennsylvania help fewer than 20 percent of 3- and 4- year-olds access high-quality programs. As a result, far too many families cannot access or afford the high-quality pre-k that is so essential to their children’s success,” said Jill Michal, president and CEO of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

Pre-K for PA seeks to expand access to critical, high-quality pre-k learning opportunities to ensure that all children are able to enter kindergarten with the skills they need to learn and succeed. According to research, children with access to high quality pre-k are more likely to advance grades and have improved social skills.

Pennsylvania voters have expressed strong, bipartisan support for making the additional investment in high-quality pre-k. A statewide poll of more than 600 likely voters conducted in November 2013 shows 63 percent of Pennsylvanians support increasing funding for pre-k and 58 percent of those polled saying they favor increased funding even if it required a tax increase.

Support for expanding access to high-quality pre-k is strong across party lines. The poll found that in both major parties and among independents, a majority of likely voters favors giving every 3- and 4-year-old access to high-quality pre-k.

“When all children arrive ready to learn, they are best able to take advantage of the educational benefits of classroom learning,” said Richard F. Dunlap, Jr., EdD, Superintendent, Upper Darby School District, “Education investment must start early before the achievement gap is too wide and expensive to overcome.”

The consequences of under-investing, or investing in pre-k programs that are not high quality, have the potential to negatively affect both society and the economy at large. Access to quality pre-k means that children are better prepared for future learning opportunities, less likely to need special education and remedial instruction, and more likely to graduate from high school and become a valued member of the workforce.

Pennsylvanians can join the campaign by visiting prekforpa.org or by following Pre-K for PA at facebook.com/prekforpa or twitter.com/prek4pa.

Pre-K for PA is a statewide collaboration led in Southeast PA by the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, Public Citizens for Children and Youth, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. The coalition is joined by statewide partners including: Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Mission: Readiness, Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children, Pennsylvania Head Start Association, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, and Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children. Find more information online at: www.prekforpa.org.

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