



*Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence*

State Director
Bruce R. Clash

June 20, 2016

Dear Member of the General Assembly:

While final decisions are being made regarding the 2016-2017 state budget, we respectfully and strongly ask you to prioritize high-quality early learning and home visiting/parent coaching investments for Pennsylvania's most vulnerable families shown to cut later crime and other costs and help put families on paths to self sufficiency.

As Pennsylvania police chiefs, sheriffs, and district attorneys who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, we know from experience, sound research and common sense that high-quality early education programs are among the most powerful weapons we have in the fight against crime. As the Commonwealth continues to face difficult fiscal issues, these investments are particularly essential because they produce both short and long-term returns.

Specifically, we urge the General Assembly to include a \$90 million expansion for Pre-K Counts and Head Start State Supplemental in the 2016-2017 state budget as another incremental step towards serving the 120,000 eligible kids most at risk of educational failure currently without access. This investment would allow 7,400 more Pennsylvania children to attend high-quality pre-k next year, and 6,200 more would receive pre-kindergarten for a full year instead of a half-year.

We also ask that the final budget include a \$10 million increase in the Family Centers and Home Visiting line item (DHS) to support parenting and child development in Pennsylvania's most vulnerable families. The providers of the four evidence-based home visiting models in PA (Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, and Early Head Start) could apply for funding from the grant program this new funding would create. These home visiting programs serve different targeted populations and employ various trained home visitors to mentor young parents and help them envision and create a positive future for their families. Strong research results of these programs include reduced maternal and later juvenile crime, reduced child abuse and neglect, positive parenting, healthy child development and reduced dependency on public assistance. **Additionally, a \$1.2 million increase to the Nurse-Family Partnership line item (DHS) will help this particularly effective program that utilizes registered nurses as home visitors to retain and attract RNs in the competitive market.**

As law enforcement leaders, we have spent much or all of our careers arresting, prosecuting, transporting and locking up criminals and take a hard stand on crime in order to protect our citizens from those intent on doing harm. While there is no substitute for tough law enforcement, experience tells us that we will never just arrest and imprison our way out of the crime problem, nor can we afford to do so. We must take serious measures before—not just after—crimes are committed.

The significant proposed \$90 million increase for these high-quality pre-k programs is outpaced by the roughly \$180 million cost to carry increase for the Department of Corrections. At \$2.2 billion in the current fiscal year, Pennsylvania is spending about seven percent of its budget on this necessary but expensive “back end” expenditure, versus about 0.6 percent of the budget for high-quality pre-k. Clearly, preventing people from turning to crime in the first place would save the public millions of dollars. The

most effective way to cut crime is to invest our energy and resources in today's at-risk children, when they still have options and opportunity ahead of them.

Research clearly shows that high-quality early learning programs for at-risk kids not only reduce kids' likelihood of committing crime later in life, but also provides far greater savings than their cost. A well-respected, independent, nonpartisan cost-benefit analysis by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy of more than 20 different, rigorous studies of preschool programs showed that preschool programs for disadvantaged children can return, on average, a "profit" (economic benefit minus costs) to society of nearly \$30,000 for every child served over their lifetimes. These returns include among other benefits less crime and incarceration, reduced special education costs, less grade repetition, less need for social services and increased graduation rates, which leads to increased earnings, workforce productivity and tax revenues.

Our latest report (attached), *Preschool Key to Cutting Pennsylvania Prison Cost and Boosting School Success*, further explains the benefits of high-quality pre-k and uses the best available research to project that a \$90 million increase in pre-k will save Pennsylvania approximately \$222 million over the lifetime of the participants. These benefits would accrue for each new cohort of children served.

Early childhood investments are shown to not only help the children and families served, but also to enhance public safety and save taxpayer dollars. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS urges Pennsylvania's policymakers to work together and find the resources necessary for these crime-fighting priorities.

Respectfully,

Ronny R. Anderson, Sheriff, Cumberland County

Dominick Bellizzie, Chief of Police, Solebury Township, Bucks County

Lance M. Benedict, Sheriff, Susquehanna County

Donald L. Bowers, Jr., Chief of Police, New Holland Borough, Lancaster County

Ivy L. Brenzel, Chief of Police, Moscow Borough, Lackawanna County

Thomas C. Carter, Chief of Police, City of Harrisburg, Dauphin County

Paul T. Dickinson, Chief of Police, Towamencin Township, Montgomery County

Patrick Dougherty, District Attorney, Indiana County

David W. Duffy, Chief of Police, Upper Gwynedd Township, Montgomery County

David J. Freed, District Attorney, Cumberland County

Robert E. Fyock, Sheriff, Indiana County

Ray C. Gerringer, Sheriff, Montour County

Richard A. Goldinger, District Attorney, Butler County

Carl J. Gotwald, Sheriff, Jefferson County

Mark E. Hall, Chief of Police, Clarion Borough, Clarion County

(continued)

Nick Hoke, Sheriff, Crawford County

Wesley Kahley, Chief of Police, City of York, York County

Thomas L. Kearney, District Attorney, York County

Thomas R. King, Chief of Police, State College Borough, Centre County

Kenneth L. Klakamp, Sheriff, Warren County

Edward M. Marsico, District Attorney, Dauphin County

James B. Martin, District Attorney, Lehigh County

Todd A. Martin, Sheriff, Monroe County

William P. Mullen, Sheriff, Allegheny County

James W. Muller, Sheriff, Adams County

S. Michael Murphy, Chief of Police, Upper Moreland Township, Montgomery County

Henry “Rick” Pasqualini, Chief of Police, Newton Township, Bucks County

Michael Picuch, District Attorney, Snyder County

Mark G. Pugliese, Chief of Police, West Hempfield Township, Lancaster County

Stefanie Salavantis, District Attorney, Luzerne County

Shane Scanlon, District Attorney, Lackawanna County

Keith B. Stains, Sheriff, Fulton County

Craig W. Stedman, District Attorney, Lancaster County

Clinton J. Walters, Sheriff, Bradford County

Carolyn B. Welsh, Sheriff, Chester County

R. Seth Williams, District Attorney, Philadelphia County