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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Schweiker, Rendell join leaders from across PA; Call on Legislature to fund Pre-K**

***Letter to the Legislature calls for $90 million investment to expand Pre-K to thousands of at-risk kids across PA***

**Harrisburg, PA (May 24, 2016)** – Former Governors Edward G. Rendell and Mark S. Schweiker led a group of influential business, civic, military and law enforcement leaders from across the state today in support of continued investment in pre-k, urging the Pennsylvania legislature and the Governor to expand access to thousands of at-risk kids in the final 2016-17 budget.

In a letter to leadership offices of the Pennsylvania legislature, the signers urged leaders in Harrisburg to cement bi-partisan consensus around a multi-year goal for growing access to high quality pre-k for all of the income eligible children and begin looking at pre-k affordability issues regarding middle class families. Specifically, they called for $90 million in additional funding (as proposed by Governor Tom Wolf) as part of the 2016-17 final state budget.

This proposal builds on the $30 million in new funding already enacted for the second half of the current school year. If realized, $120 million in additional funding over two years for high-quality pre-k will serve an additional 14,000 three- and four-year-olds.

Across Pennsylvania, there are more than 175,000 3- and 4-year-olds who are at-risk because they are in lower income households—70 percent of these at-risk young learners – more than 120,000 children statewide – had no access to publicly funded pre-k last year.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Below is the full text of the letter and signatories.

You have heard from many of us on the life altering benefits that high quality pre-kindergarten can provide to our Commonwealth’s youngest learners. You have also heard of the limited availability of such programs serving only one out of every six preschool age children in Pennsylvania.

The 2015-16 state budget included $30 million in additional funding for PA Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance programs – expanding access to more than 6,000 at-risk children. While this investment was a positive step, the fact remains that more than 120,000 income eligible three- and four-year-olds do not have access each year due to insufficient funding.

We encourage you to work with your colleagues to cement bi-partisan consensus around a multi-year goal for growing access to high quality pre-k for all of the income eligible children and begin looking at pre-k affordability issues regarding middle class families.

Specifically, we ask your support of $90 million in additional funding as part of the 2016-17 final state budget as yet another incremental step towards the above-mentioned goal.

Such an investment will set us on a path to reduce educational, public welfare and incarceration costs and have the most important added benefit of ensuring brighter futures for more of the Commonwealth’s children.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider this correspondence.

Respectfully submitted,

**Mark Schweiker**, 44th Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Ed Rendell**, 45th Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Mary Stengel Austen**, President & CEO, Tierney Communications

**Joe Bard**, Executive Director, PA Association of Rural and Small Schools

**Bruce Bartels**, Former President, WellSpan Health

**Dennis Benchoff**, Lieutenant General (Ret.), United States Army

**Don Bernhard**, Former Director, Community Affairs, PP&L

**Betsy Bort**, Vice-President, Commercial Lending, Erie Bank

**Steven Bradley**, Chairman, African-American Chamber of Commerce

**Jim Buckheit**, Executive Director, PA Association of School Administrators

**Anthony Campisi**, President & CEO, Glatfelter Insurance Group

**Robert Celeski**, Chairman, Employees Community Service Fund of GE

**Denise Cesare**, Former President & CEO, Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania

**David Cohen**, Senior Executive Vice-President, Comcast Corporation

**Pete Danchak**, President – Northeast PA, PNC Bank

**Phil Devorris**, President & CEO, Blair Companies

**Ron DiNicola**, Partner, DiNicola Law Offices

**Stephanie Doliveira**, Vice-President, Human Resources, Sheetz Inc.

**Bob Esch**, Vice-President External Affairs, American Refining Group

**Tim Fallon**, Chief Executive Officer, PBS-39

**Varsovia Fernandez**, Senior Vice-President, Phila. Market Leader, Customers Bank

**Frank Ford**, CEO – Allentown Campus, St. Luke’s University Health Network

**Sara Furlong**, Executive Communications Coordinator, American Refining Group

**Robert Fyock**, Sheriff, Indiana County Sheriff’s Office

**Jeff Gayman**, Senior Vice-President, Retail Banking & Consumer Lending, Orrstown Bank

**Thomas Gluck**, Executive Director, PA Association of Intermediate Units

**Brad Gosser**, Executive Director and Vice-President, Greenville-Reynolds Dev. Corporation

**Michael Hanes**, President & CEO, Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts

**Bill Hankowsky**, Chairman, President & CEO, Liberty Property Trust

**Dave Hawk**, Chairman of the Board, Gertrude Hawk Chocolates

**Paul Healey**, Executive Director, PA Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals

**Fritz Heinemann**, President & CEO, EconomicsPennsylvania

**Tara Hemmer**, Area Vice-President, Waste Management of Greater Mid-Atlantic

**Tom Hogan**, District Attorney, Chester County District Attorney’s Office

**Dan Hoover**, President & CEO, Roaring Spring Blank Book Company

**Joe Hurd**, President & CEO, Blair County Chamber of Commerce

**Renee Cardwell Hughes**, Chief Executive Officer, American Red Cross SE PA Chapter

**Bill Isler**, President & CEO, Fred Rogers Company

**Kathy Killian**, Vice-President of Human Resources & Customer Services, Philadelphia Phillies

**Tom King**, Chief of Police, State College Police Department

**James Kinneer**, Vice-President, Indiana Regional Medical Center

**Robert Krasne**, Chief Executive Officer, Steinman Communications

**Jay Kshatri**, Chairman of the Board, Community Services for Children, Inc.

**Allen Kukovich**, Attorney At Law

**Keith Leaphart**, President & CEO, Replica Creative Inc.

**Alice Lindenauer**, Managing Director, Global Human Resources, Hamilton Lane

**Jerry Maginnis**, Office Managing Partner (Ret.), Phila. Office, KPMG LLP

**Nathan Mains**, Executive Director, PA School Boards Association

**Ed Martin**, Chief Executive Officer, Goodx.com

**Dwight Mathis**, Market Executive, Merril Lynch

**Rob McNeill**, Managing Partner, Deloitte, LLP – Greater Philadelphia Region

**Paula McWilliams**, President & CEO, Heritage Community Initiatives

**Phyllis Mundy**, State Representative (Ret.), 120th Legislative District

**Dennis Noonan**, Vice-President, Sales & Marketing, Ford Business Machines

**Jerry Oleksiak**, President, Pennsylvania State Education Association

**Dave Patti**, President & CEO, Pennsylvania Business Council

**Kathleen Pavelko**, President & CEO, WITF Public Media

**Joseph Peluso**, Management Consultant

**Phil Peterson**, Deputy-Director, ReadyNation

**Norm Rich**, Former President & CEO, Weis Markets Inc.

**Kristen Rotz**, President, United Way of Pennsylvania

**Brian Schreiber**, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center

**Nick Scott, Jr.**, Vice-President, Scott Enterprises

**Judith von Seldeneck**, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Diversified Search

**Sandra Strauss**, Director of Public Advocacy, PA Council of Churches

**Sam Talarico**, President, Northwestern Region – PSEA

**Stephen Tang**, President & CEO, University City Science Center

**Vincentina Taylor**, President, Waveline Direct, LLC

**Art Thomas**, Vice-President, Meck-Tech, Inc.

**Kevin Thomas**, Executive Director, PA District Kiwanis International

**John Touey**, Principal, Salveson Stetson Group

**James Waddington**, Director Strategic Marketing Solutions, Lockheed-Martin

**R. Seth Williams**, District Attorney, Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office

**Andrew Williford**, Vice-President, Volvo Construction Equipment Operations

**Tom Wilson**, Rear Admiral (Ret.), United States Navy

**Colby Windholz**, Vice-President of Business Banking, First National Bank

**Jake Witherell**, Chief Operating Officer, Schell Games

**Todd Wolynn**, President & CEO, Kids Plus Pediatrics

**Suzanne Yunghans**, Executive Director, PA Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics

*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. For more information visit* [*www.prekforpa.org*](http://www.prekforpa.org)*.*

*The Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission is a network of business leaders that work to secure public investment in early learning by focusing on practices that are educationally, economically, and scientifically sound by increasing business, civic, and public awareness of the importance of early childhood education.*

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