



Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BUDGET REACTION

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**IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, PPC SAYS THANK YOU FOR CONTINUED
INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION OF COMMONWEALTH'S CHILDREN
*PA Partnerships for Children Comments on Governor's 2009/10 Budget***

HARRISBURG (Feb. 4, 2009) – Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) today applauded Governor Ed Rendell for his continued commitment to pre-K through postsecondary education as evidenced in his budget address. The increase of \$300 million for basic education moves Pennsylvania closer to narrowing the funding adequacy gap cited in the General Assembly's 2007 Costing-Out Study and represents a strong and sustained commitment to use a fair and rational formula to fund basic education.

“Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children applauds the governor for making children and their education a top priority once again,” said Joan L. Benso, president & CEO of the nonprofit children's advocacy organization. “Investing in education is prudent public policy in these challenging economic times. Investments in education funding from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary completion for all young people is crucial to the future growth of Pennsylvania's economy. An investment in the intellectual capacity of today's students and tomorrow's workforce will fuel the state's economic engine.”

The expansion of Pre-K Counts by \$8.6 million will allow an additional 1,000 children to benefit from this proven program. Results from the first year of Pre-K Counts showed that nearly 70 percent of children demonstrated age-appropriate skills and behavior at the end of the school year indicating they were prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn and prepared to succeed. Research shows that investing in high-quality early education, like Pre-K Counts, reaps dividends through improved education performance, savings in special education and social welfare spending, reduced crime, as well as increased tax revenue.

(MORE)

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Another element of the governor's education budget includes a proposal to help youth and their families afford college. While 75 percent of jobs in the new economy require postsecondary education, less than 50 percent of the Pennsylvania workforce has this level of education. Making matters worse is the reality that 71 percent of college students in Pennsylvania graduated with an average debt of nearly \$24,000 in 2007.

"It is more important than ever before to have a well-educated workforce and yet paying for college is out of reach for many young people and their families. We congratulate the governor for launching the discussion focusing on how to make college a reality for more young Pennsylvanians and proposing a scholarship program to provide direct student assistance," Benso said.

"We look forward to working with the Rendell Administration and the General Assembly on passage of a budget that continues to improve the health, education and well-being of the Commonwealth's children and youth," Benso added.

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