



Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Joan L. Benso
President & CEO

116 Pine Street, Suite 430
Harrisburg, PA 17101
www.papartnerships.org

David W. Sweet, Esq.
Board Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kathy Geller Myers
717-236-5680; 717-903-3716 (mobile)
kgmyers@papartnerships.org

Close the Gap: Save Pre-K and Child Care

Early childhood education advocates tell legislators to do what's best for PA kids



Parent Kristen Punter, whose daughter is enrolled in a Pre-K Counts program, speaks at the Budget Watch rally and urged legislators to raise revenue to preserve programs early childhood programs.

HARRISBURG (July 8, 2009) – Early childhood education advocates today sent a message to legislators and the governor about the importance of closing the budget gap and raising revenue so that Pennsylvania children continue to benefit from Pre-K Counts and Head Start and the children of working parents can access child care subsidy.

“As policymakers struggle to find solutions, children and families hang in the balance. It’s important not to lose sight of what our state budget priorities are truly about,” said Joan L. Benso, president and CEO of PA Partnerships for Children. “We can only cut so much before Pennsylvania’s children and families lose access to vital programs and services. It is prudent for state government to seek efficiencies whenever possible. It is prudent for the state to assure that we focus our spending on the programs and services that meet the greatest needs and ensure children top that list.

“But it is also prudent for the Commonwealth to consider all revenue generating options in order to meet those needs,” she added.

Benso was joined by other early childhood education advocates from across the state.

“Because of Pre-K Counts, nearly 12,000 three- and four-year-olds attended high-quality public school pre-kindergarten programs last school year, and there are more than 7,800 on the Pre-K Counts waiting list for next school year,” said Michelle Figlar, executive director, Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children. “We must stop the cuts and raise revenue if we want these kids to have access to preschool in the fall.”

Christie Balka, director of child care and budget policy for Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), Philadelphia, said there are 16,000 children on the waiting list for subsidized child care – up from 5,300 a year ago.

“These are hard-working families who depend on child care subsidy,” Balka said. “Dependable child care helps parents go to work and be productive members of their communities. But some of them have been on the waiting list for child care for more than a year. We must raise revenue and help get children off the waiting list.”

Others echoed the same support.

“To me, it’s simple: The Senate cuts to the governor’s budget were devastating to early education programs and child care. How much more can we cut from children’s programs? When do kids come first?,” asked Terry Casey, executive director of the Pennsylvania Child Care Association. “If we want to save early childhood programs from being slashed in this budget, we have to raise revenue. Period.”

More information is available by contacting Kathy Geller Myers of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) at 717-236-5680 or kgmyers@papartnerships.org. Visit us at www.papartnerships.org

###