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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PENNSYLVANIA PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN APPLAUDS FUNDING
FOR PRE-K IN GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED 2007/08 BUDGET**
*New Initiative Brings State Closer to Providing Critical Pre-Kindergarten
Services to All Children in PA*

HARRISBURG (Feb. 6, 2007) – PA Partnerships for Children (PPC) today applauded Gov. Ed Rendell's top education priority for the upcoming budget, a \$75 million investment in pre-K initiatives that will lay a foundation for success for at least 11,000 young Pennsylvanians, while bolstering local public-private partnerships already providing these critical services across the state.

In his budget address, Governor Rendell called for the \$75 million state commitment to be funded through the Department of Education. To begin the expansion, the initiative, called "Pennsylvania Pre K Counts," will focus on at-risk three- and four-year-old children, particularly those in low-income families. The grants will be awarded to providers through an RFP process that will spur innovation and competition across the state.

The new Pennsylvania Pre K Counts initiative builds on the work of the current Pre K Counts Public-Private Partnership for Educational Success, a three-year project funded by leading Pennsylvania foundations and supported by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Early results from this public-private initiative find that children's early learning improves when all early learning programs in a community share resources to improve quality and coordinate early learning experiences in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and beyond.

"We have been making great progress in Pennsylvania in providing meaningful pre-K programs in communities around the state – from Philadelphia to Harmony to Erie – but this new commitment will bring the state to a new level entirely," said Joan Benso, president and CEO of PPC. "We'll add thousands of kids, and we'll provide an enormous boost to these successful public-private

partnerships that already are in place and providing this critical range of services.”

Dozens of studies in recent years have all found that significant investments in pre-kindergarten programs pay long-term dividends to children and to the state as a whole.

Benso noted that every dollar invested in high-quality pre-K saves taxpayers up to \$17 in future costs by reducing the need for remedial and special education, welfare, and criminal justice services.

In addition, a recent study conducted in Pennsylvania found that school districts investing in pre-K could recoup as much as 78% of their spending in pre-K in education savings. Providing targeted preschool programs could reduce special education expenditures in the state by \$68 million annually, a reduction of 8 percent.

“It is no wonder that other states are recognizing the value of these types of investments,” Benso said. “In New York, Illinois, Arkansas and Oklahoma – to cite a few – policymakers have realized this. The governor is to be congratulated for this initiative, and we look forward to working with the administration and the General Assembly to see that Pennsylvania steps up and makes this investment.”

Editors’ note: For more background on pre-kindergarten initiatives in general and the studies cited in this release, please contact Kathy Geller Myers, PPC communications director, at 717-236-5680, ext. 208.

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