

May 8, 2007

Letters

Chiefs: Investing in Pre-K will curb crime

To parents, pre-kindergarten is a great way to help get their children off on the right start to succeed in school. To law enforcement leaders, quality pre-k is an important crime prevention investment. From years on the front line fighting crime, we know that there is no substitute for tough law enforcement; however, we also know that we will never arrest and imprison our way out of the crime problem. Any comprehensive plan to beat back crime must include long-term solutions like quality pre-kindergarten, Head Start and educational childcare that are proven to help cut the pipeline that funnels young people into lives of crime and violence. The evidence is in:

A landmark study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program in Michigan found that at age 27, those at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds who had not attended the program were five times more likely to be chronic law-breakers than similar children who attended the program.

A study of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers compared at-risk kids in the program with similar kids who were not in the program. Kids who were left out of the program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. This means that by the time all the current participants turn 18, the Child-Parent Centers will have prevented an estimated 33,000 crimes. Early Head Start research shows that

children participating in the program have higher levels of cognitive and language development, better attention to play, and lower levels of aggressive behavior.

Yet inadequate funding denies thousands of Pennsylvania's children in our most at-risk communities access to quality early learning programs, leaving them more likely to engage in future criminal activity.

In the state budget currently being considered by the General Assembly is the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts initiative, which would allocate a \$75 million invest-

ment to create half and full-day pre-school programs in school districts, Head Start, child care centers and nursery schools across the state, serving as many as 11,000 children 3 and 4 years of age.

The funding would be made available to all Pennsylvania communities through a competitive grant process, with priority given to school districts and other providers who serve children at risk of education failure.

Kids from pre-K programs have an advantage that begins early and stays with them for the rest of their lives, which ulti-

mately makes our communities safer and more secure. The sooner we start, the sooner we will realize the benefits.

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts initiative is worth our support.

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Chief Senkow is signing this editorial on behalf of the Delaware County Chiefs of Police Association, which voted unanimously to endorse this message.