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## Quality child care: It's a matter of safety

I am a prosecutor in the child-abuse unit in Chester County, and I urge you to support the proposal to fund prekindergarten - not just as a prosecutor, but as a mom as well. Called Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, the program would give children a chance to thrive in the classroom at an early age.

My job gives me daily exposure to the most horrific crimes possible - the physical and sexual abuse of children. My colleagues and I have met many frantic, guilt-ridden mothers who blame themselves for their child's victimization. In many instances these women, often single moms, can't afford quality child care. Funding programs that allow these hardworking moms to put their child in a safe, structured and nurturing environment can help reduce the risk of this victimization. To help achieve this end, there is a proposal in the legislature to add 400 slots to the Child Care Works program, plus some money to increase child-care-center teachers' salaries ever so slightly.

In Chester County, one of the most prosperous counties in Pennsylvania, we just spent millions of dollars expanding our prison. Even we are overcrowded! If money is spent up front to help children succeed early on in life, the chances of having to spend more money to build prisons diminishes. And isn't a productive, taxpaying member of our workforce a better alternative than a young man or woman sitting in a cell, doing nothing, but costing taxpayers money without anything to show for it?

As a mom, I had the luxury of researching every type of child-care option available. I was able to choose a day care that provides a small and warm setting, with an extremely qualified staff and a wonderful director who makes it her mission to make every child feel loved and special. When I close the door behind me, I don't worry for a moment while I am at work whether my son is getting lots of love and attention. I know that the staff has certain qualifications and that the facility meets standards above those required for licensing because it is enrolled in the Keystone Stars program.

When every hardworking mother goes to work, she deserves to know that her child is in a safe, developmentally appropriate situation, with teachers who care and know how to work

with young children. Similarly, every child deserves to be cared for in a way that helps them grow and blossom into fine, productive citizens. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Child Care Works, and Keystone Stars will go a long way toward accomplishing that goal!

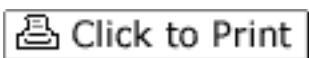
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