

Philadelphia Law Enforcement Leaders Hail State's Pre-Kindergarten Initiative as Part of Solution for City's Violence

CONTACT: Bruce Clash, (717) 233-1520, (717) 385-5300 (cell)

FOR RELEASE: June 5, 2007

Philadelphia, June 5th— Philadelphia law enforcement leaders released a report and a poll today that shows high quality Pre-Kindergarten not only prepares children to succeed in school, but also prevents crime.

The report **Preventing Crime in Philadelphia: Investing in Quality Pre-Kindergarten**, shows that thousands of Philadelphia children are at greater risk of becoming criminals due to inadequate funding for pre-k.

Philadelphia Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson and Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham released the report and poll, and urged the state Legislature to support the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts initiative as budget negotiations continue for the 2007-2008 state budget.

The initiative, part of Governor Edward Rendell's proposed budget, is a \$75 million investment to increase access to quality pre-kindergarten services for 11,000 3- and 4-year-olds in at-risk communities across the Commonwealth. If approved, Philadelphia's school district, along with 50 community partners, could receive up to \$28.8 million in new state funds to provide quality pre-k for 3,700 additional children. The money would be allocated on a competitive grant basis to school districts, Head Start, child care centers and nursery schools that meet quality standards.

"Making sure at-risk children have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs is one of the most important steps we can take to cut future crime by keeping kids from becoming criminals," Johnson said.

He cited a study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program in Michigan which found that at-risk kids excluded from the program were five times more likely to grow up to become chronic lawbreakers than those who attended the program.

By age 40, those left out of the Perry Preschool Program were twice as likely to have been arrested for violent crimes, four times more likely to have been arrested for drug felonies, and seven times more likely to have been arrested for possession of drugs than those who attended the program.

Citing Philadelphia's dramatic increase in crime in recent years, Abraham said a significant drop in crime will not occur unless measures are taken before—not only after—crimes occur.

"We understand our lawmakers have a lot of funding priorities in the state budget, but there are few investments that are more thoroughly researched and proven to yield such a wide array of future benefits including crime prevention and taxpayer savings as quality pre-kindergarten," Abraham said. She continued, "It is my sincere hope that the General Assembly will fund this Pre-K Counts initiative as part of a comprehensive anti-crime plan for the City of Philadelphia and for the Commonwealth as a whole."

In Philadelphia, roughly 9,000 3- and 4-year-olds living below the poverty level are currently receiving quality early childhood services. But at least 15,000 3- and 4-year-olds are living in poverty in Philadelphia, leaving a minimum of 6,000 eligible preschool age children with no access to quality pre-k.

At the news conference held at Children's Village Child Care Center in Center City Philadelphia, Johnson, Abraham

and Bruce Clash, state director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania, also released results of a poll showing that almost half (45 percent) of Philadelphia respondents cited drugs/crime/violence as being the most important issue in the City right now.

The next highest ranking concerns were education/schools (18 percent) and economy/jobs/unemployment (12 percent). The poll also showed that 73 percent of voting-age Philadelphia residents support the proposed Pre-Kindergarten Counts initiative in next year's budget. The independent poll was conducted April 29-May 3, 2007, by Harrisburg-based Susquehanna Polling and Research.

"Three out of four respondents said they supported spending \$75 million in additional funding for the Pre-K Counts budget proposal," Clash said. "Pennsylvania law enforcement leaders say this additional money will not only educate children, it will help give them the right start in life and turn them away from a life of crime."

Abraham and Johnson are among the 230 members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania. The organization is part of the national organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, which has more than 3,000 law enforcement leaders as members, comprising police chiefs, district attorneys, sheriffs and violent crime survivors.

Click [here](#) to view the full report.