WE'RE THE GUYS YOU
PAY LATER

PENNSYLVANIA CAN PAY NOW OR PAY MUCH MORE LATER

If Pennsylvania invests in pre-kindergarten now, we can save over $350 million.

FIGHT CRIME: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania

Acknowledgements

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization. The organization has a membership of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors, nearly 200 of whom are here in Pennsylvania. The members take a hard-nosed look at what approaches work–and what don't–to prevent crime and violence. They then recommend effective strategies to state and national policymakers. It operates under the umbrella of the Council for a Strong America.

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Report authored by William Christeson, Sandra Bishop-Josef, Ph.D., Natasha O'Dell Archer, J.D., Chris Beakey, Kara Clifford and Bruce Clash.

Publication layout and design by Stefanie Campolo, Soren Messner-Zidell, Sara Pruzin, and Mariana Galloway.

The following staff members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids contributed to production of this report: David Kass and Miriam Rollin.

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Executive Summary

PENNSYLVANIA CAN PAY NOW OR PAY MUCH MORE LATER

If Pennsylvania invests in pre-kindergarten now, we can save over $350 million

The almost 5,000 law enforcement leaders around the nation and more than 190 here in Pennsylvania who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids have a direct message for everyone who cares about the impact and cost of crime:

Pennsylvania jails are full of people serving time for serious and costly crimes. It doesn't have to be that way—providing at-risk kids with high-quality early learning programs can reduce the costs and impact of crime in the future.

Law enforcement leaders know that one of the best ways to keep young people from dropping out of school and becoming criminals is to make sure they have a foundation for success in their earliest years.
By standing up in support of high-quality early education for kids today we hope to see less crime and incarceration in years to come.

Law enforcement leaders base their views on both personal experiences and research. A study that followed **children who participated in high-quality preschool and parent coaching programs through Chicago's Child-Parent Centers found they were 20 percent less likely to be arrested for a felony or be incarcerated as young adults than those who did not attend.** In recent years, studies of state pre-kindergarten programs have found significant increases in academic performance, and also important decreases in the need for special education and in being held back in school.

Reducing crime is one of the key reasons why Governors and state legislators across the political spectrum have made bold commitments to high-quality pre-kindergarten. **And now we are at a key fork in the road: policymakers in our state have an outstanding opportunity to bring higher quality early education to children currently enrolled and to offer it to thousands more children in Pennsylvania.**

We currently spend $75 billion every year on corrections nationwide to incarcerate more than 2 million criminals. Pennsylvania spends more than $2 billion a year. That does not include the cost of county jails.

A sophisticated analysis of over 20 pre-kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children demonstrated that quality pre-k returned an average "profit" (economic benefits minus costs) to society of over $26,000 for every child served by cutting crime and the cost of incarceration and reducing other costs such as special education and grade retention.

The choice is simple: Pay for early education programs delivered with high-quality to Pennsylvania kids now, or pay far more later for the costs of crime in Pennsylvania.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania supports current efforts to increase the quality of and access to early education in Pennsylvania.

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A Fork in the Road

As law enforcement leaders, our number one priority is protecting the safety of our communities in Pennsylvania. We do this by arresting, prosecuting and, when necessary, incarcerating people who commit crimes. But ultimately our best opportunity to improve public safety is to keep people from becoming involved in crime in the first place. To do so, we urge our elected leaders to invest in strategies and practices that have proven, positive and long-term impacts on crime reduction.

We already know where our current path is leading us:

• Although crime rates have fallen over the past 20 years, including in Pennsylvania, there are still 1.2 million violent crimes and 9 million property crimes committed against people in our communities across America every year.[1] **In Pennsylvania, there are over 41,000 violent crimes annually, a rate of 327 per 100,000** (compared to 368 per 100,000 overall in the U.S.);[2]

• **Pennsylvania has more than 49,000 adults incarcerated in state prisons;** [3]

• Nationally, we spend nearly $75 billion a year to incarcerate adults in federal and state prisons or local jails.[4] **Pennsylvania spends more than $2 billion a year**, about seven percent of the state budget;[5] and

• Seven out of ten state prisoners nationwide do not have a high school diploma, and finding stable employment once they leave prison is very challenging.[6] The incarceration rate for Pennsylvanians without a high school diploma is over 5 percent, compared to 1.6 percent among those with a high school diploma or GED and 0.6 percent for those with some postsecondary education.[7]

> "The incarceration rate for Pennsylvanians without a high school diploma is over 5 percent, compared to 1.6 percent among those with a high school diploma or GED.

State Correctional Institution Camp Hill

> "Pennsylvania spends more than $2 billion a year on incarceration, about seven percent of the state budget.

While these facts are daunting, they do not even begin to reflect crime's other economic costs, or the suffering of crime victims in Pennsylvania. The path we are on is both fiscally unsustainable and devastating in its impact on human lives.

Making a Smarter Choice, at a Pivotal Time in a Child's Life

Fortunately, we can steer millions of children across Pennsylvania toward successful lives through high-quality pre-kindergarten, which has proven it can lead to **less abuse and neglect, better performance in school, fewer high school drop-outs and, ultimately, fewer crimes committed and a reduction in the number of prisoners.**

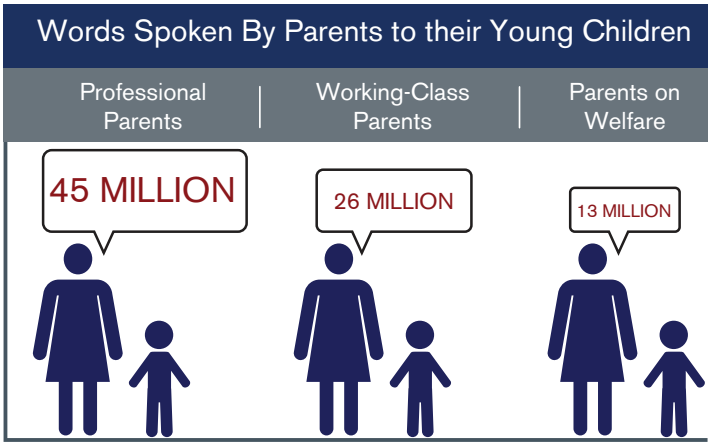
The research behind these outcomes shows that the early childhood period (birth to age 5) is a time of rapid brain development, and that hundreds of new connections in the brain form every second.[8]

Early experiences play a large role in determining how brain connections are formed and in the "wiring" that becomes the foundation on which all later learning is built.

For example, by age 6 months, babies start to understand the link between words and their meanings. This sets the stage for language development and later reading, which are key to later school success. Yet children from different backgrounds have very different early experiences. Researchers observed children in their own homes monthly for over two years, until the age of three, and recorded how many words their parents spoke to them. There were large differences in the average number of words spoken to the children by professional parents, working class parents, and parents receiving welfare:

- professional parents 45 million words
- working-class parents 26 million
- parents receiving welfare 13 million.[9]

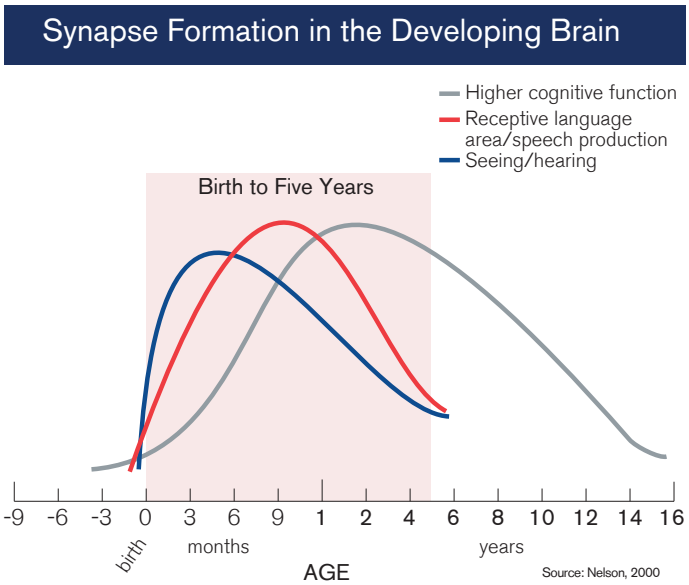
These differences affected the children's vocabulary development: by age three, children with professional parents had average vocabularies of 1,116 words, compared to 749 words for working-class and 525 for children of parents receiving welfare. By the time children reach kindergarten, too many are not only far behind in vocabulary development, but on pre-literacy and pre-math skills (such as knowing their alphabet or being able to count to ten), as well. Many also face challenges in learning to control impulses and behavior so they can get along with other students and teachers. High-quality pre-kindergarten can help these children get on track, both academically and behaviorally,



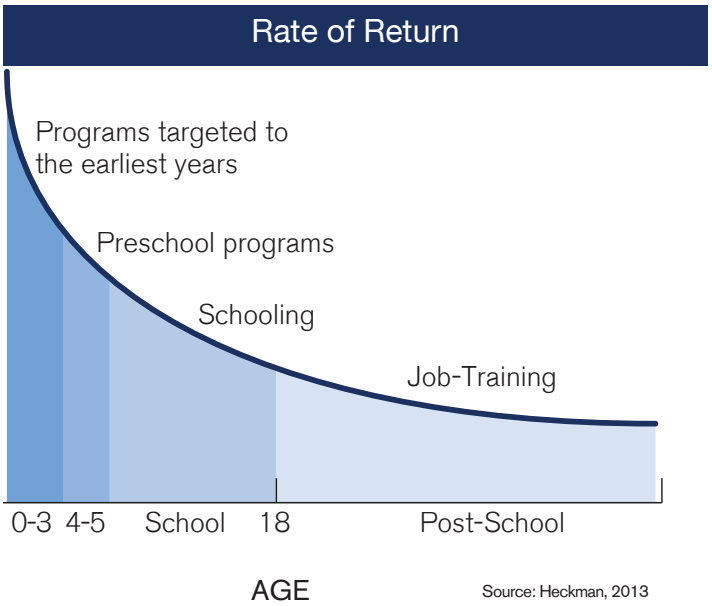
Source: Hart & Risley, 2004

so they will be ready for kindergarten, despite these early deficits. High-quality pre-kindergarten programs also work with parents to support them in their role as their child's first teachers.

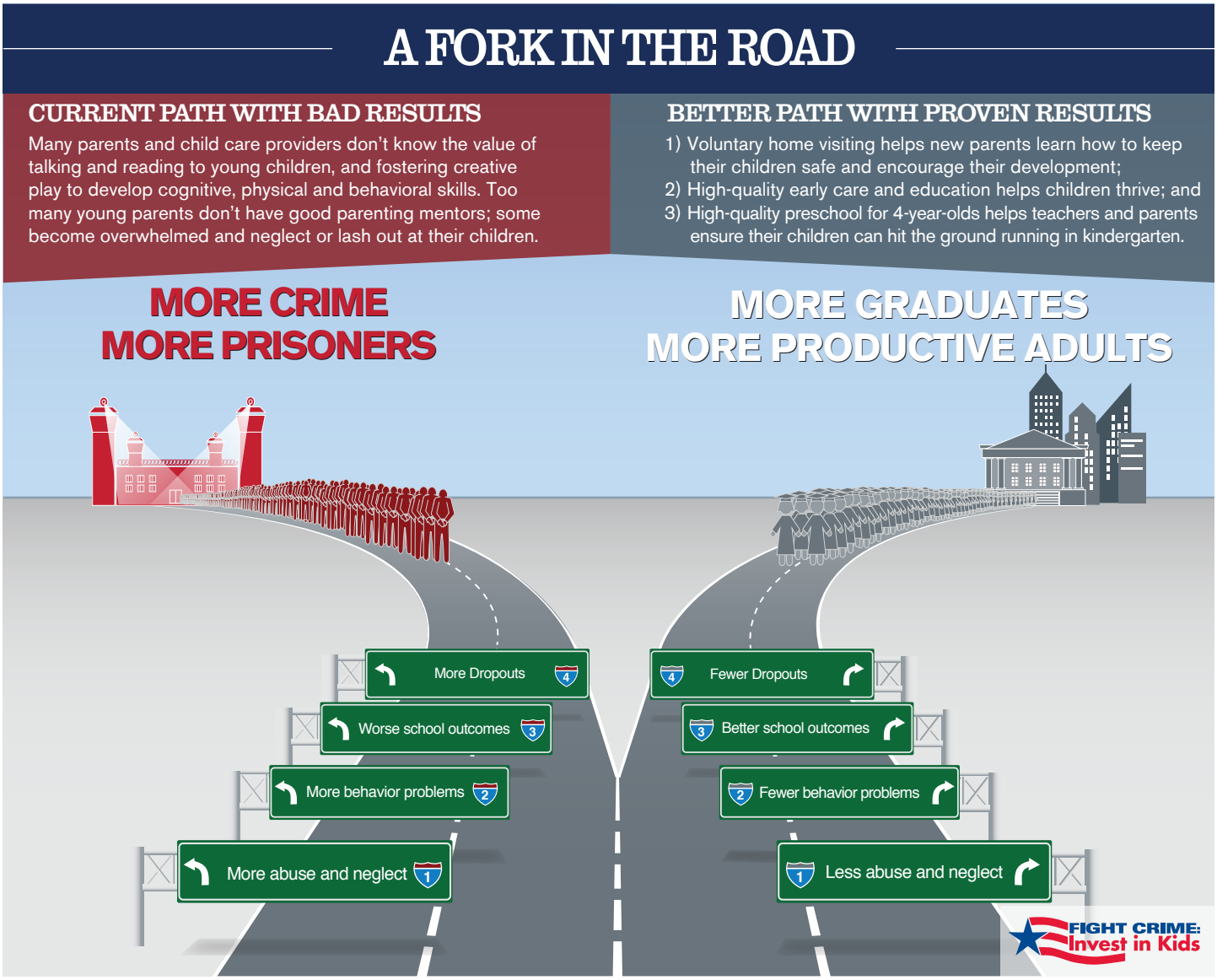
James Heckman, the Nobel-winning economist from the University of Chicago, has conducted groundbreaking work with economists, statisticians and neuroscientists and has proven that the quality of early childhood development strongly influences health, social and economic outcomes. He argues that we should invest sufficiently in younger children and in coaching their parents because those early investments will generate the greatest return. But the opposite is happening: we actually spend far less on younger children than on older children and adults.[10]



Source: Nelson, 2000



Source: Heckman, 2013



The Pathway to Less Crime

The path we set children upon, in their earliest years, can make a huge difference as they proceed through school and beyond. Research has shown that high-quality early education and care from birth through pre-kindergarten will result in more successful outcomes:

1 Less abuse and neglect:

The Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) is a pre-kindergarten program that has served over 100,000 children and followed them up to age 28. This program also coaches parents to help them understand their children's health needs, create safer home environments and develop parenting skills.

CPC cut child abuse and neglect in half for the children served, compared to similar children from families not being helped.[11]

2 Fewer behavior problems:

Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts Public Private Partnership program cut the portion of children at risk for problematic social and self-control behavior from 22 percent to 4 percent.[12]

3 Better school outcomes:

• **Ready for school**: Boston's universal pre-kindergarten program improved mathematics, literacy and language skills among participating children equivalent to seven months of additional learning, compared to children who did not attend.[13] State pre-kindergarten programs are also reporting important improvements.[14]

• **Less special education**: Pennsylvania's pre-k program's success in helping children learn self-control indicates fewer of those children will need special education. New Jersey, which has followed its children through the 4th and 5th grades, found that the children served were 31 percent less likely to be placed in special education than a control group.[15]

• **Not held back in school**: Participants in Michigan's state pre-kindergarten, the Great Start Readiness Program, were held back in school 51 percent less often than non-participants.[16] Children served in Tennessee's pre-k program were half as likely to be held back in kindergarten.[17] New Jersey's preschool program found its children were held back 40 percent less often.[18]

• **Increases in reading and math scores that persist**: North Carolina's Smart Start and More at Four initiatives to improve early education found that the children in counties that spent more per student were five months ahead in reading at third grade and three to five months ahead in math by third grade when compared to children in counties that spent less per student.[19]

New Jersey's preschool program, which served disadvantaged school districts statewide, reported that participating children were three-fourths of a year ahead in math and two-thirds of a year ahead in literacy in 4th and 5th grades.[20]

These findings show that academic benefits from high-quality pre-kindergarten need not "fade out." The New Jersey researchers report that their findings are on par with the earlier results achieved by Chicago's CPC program, which later went on to achieve very strong graduation and crime reduction outcomes.

4 Fewer drop-outs:

• The Chicago CPC pre-k program reported a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rates by age 20 among its participants.[21]

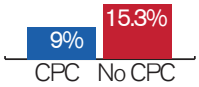
• Michigan's Great Start Readiness program reported a 35 percent increase in graduates,[22] and

• The Perry Preschool Program saw a 44 percent increase in graduation rates by age 40.[23]

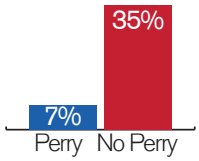
In Pennsylvania, 14 percent of high school students still fail to graduate on time.[24]

5 Less crime:

• Children not served by the Chicago CPC program were **70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18**.[25]

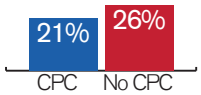


• By age 27, children not served by the Perry Preschool Program were **five times more likely to be chronic offenders with five or more arrests**.[26]

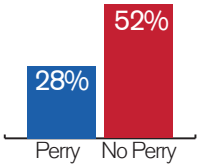


6 Fewer prisoners:

• By age 24, the **people served by the Chicago CPC were 20 percent less likely to have served time in a jail or prison**.[27]



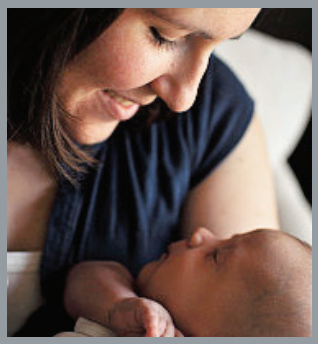
• By age 40, the children served by the Perry Preschool program were **46 percent less likely to have been sentenced to prison or jail**.[28]



Increasing graduation rates decreases serious crime

Economists Enrico Moretti and Lance Lochner studied the relationship over time between changes in graduation rates and crime. They concluded that a 10 percentage point increase in graduation rates – going from 50 percent to 60 percent, for example – reduces murder and assault rates by about 20 percent.

Source: Lochner & Moretti (2004), *The American Economic Review*



Stronger parents

The most successful pre-k programs with long-term results—such as the Perry Preschool, CPC and New Jersey's state preschool—work with parents to teach them how to reinforce positive behaviors and encourage them to routinely read and speak to their children, so they are better prepared for success in the years to come. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. However, some parents do not have the knowledge or experience necessary to fully support their children's development. High-quality pre-k programs partner with parents to help them improve their children's academic and behavioral outcomes.

It All Adds Up

No baby is destined, at birth, to become a criminal. The road to criminal behavior is paved with childhood abuse and neglect, inadequate preparation for school, unaddressed behavior problems, poor academic performance and dropping out of high school. The path to success in life is driven by school readiness, the ability to get along with others, academic achievement and high school graduation. We need to take action, right now, to ensure children have the opportunity for quality pre-kindergarten so they are on the right path for life.

Quality and Accountability Are Key

Results from New Jersey, North Carolina and Michigan should effectively end the debate on whether high-quality state pre-kindergarten efforts can be brought to scale and deliver strong and lasting results. Pennsylvania early learning programs must continue their quality improvement efforts, and if any state pre-kindergarten or Head Start sites aren't achieving meaningful and lasting results, such as reductions in children's behavior problems or improved math and literacy skills, the program administrators need to find out what the successful programs are doing differently.

To attain lasting results, programs must be high quality. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) lists 10 structural indicators of quality, focusing on class size, teacher-child ratios, teacher credentials and training, learning standards, screening and other services, and program oversight.[29] NIEER also argues that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs should be full-day, based on results from a randomized trial that showed that children who participated in a full-day program (8 hours) improved more on vocabulary and math assessments than did children in a part-day (2.5 to 3 hours) program (11 to 12 points versus 6 to 7 points, respectively).[30]

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program meets seven of the ten quality benchmarks established by NIEER. The Pennsylvania Head Start Supplemental Assistance program meets eight of the ten NIEER quality benchmarks.[31]

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation describes 15 "essential elements of high-quality pre-K" that move beyond program inputs to examine what actually happens in the classroom, particularly the quality of teacher-child interactions and teacher instruction.[32] These elements include a strong focus on data and accountability: high-quality pre-k programs collect data to see how they are performing, at every level — district, program, teacher and student. These data are then used to improve program performance, to ensure that children are well prepared for school.

Steve Barnett, the Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), argues that "an accountability and continuous improvement system is a prerequisite for quality, as is adequate funding for those being held accountable."[33] Administrators of our most successful state pre-k programs take nothing for granted and are constantly working to learn from each other and make improvements.

As Pennsylvania looks to expand access it also needs to be sure that its programs have adequate funding and continue to follow the successful approaches that will help ensure high quality. Pennsylvania must also rigorously measure results, so it can continually strive to attain even greater results going forward.[38] That is how Pennsylvania will reap the rewards of effective pre-kindergarten programs.

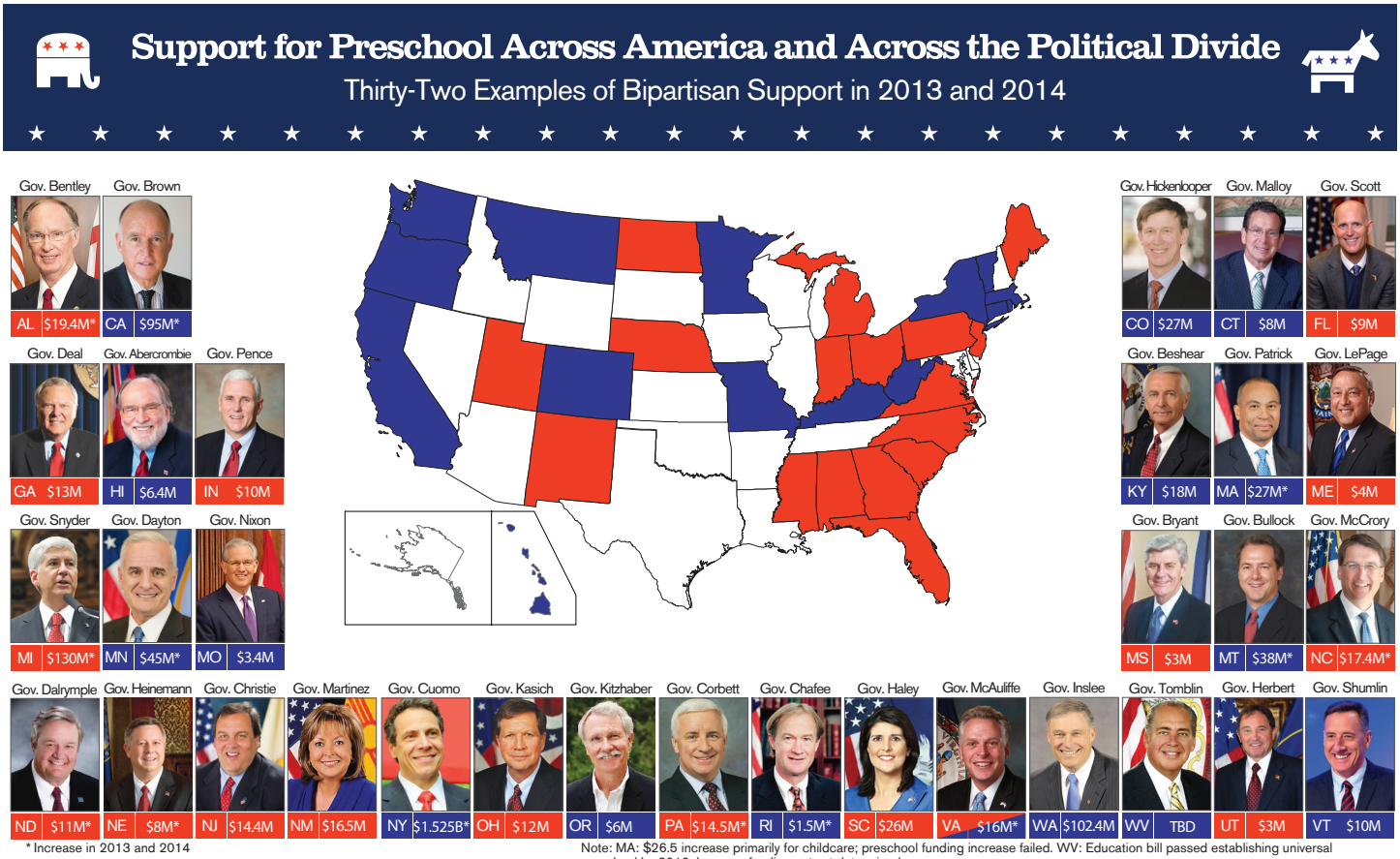
Pennsylvania must expand access to high-quality pre-k programs:

- 56,000 Pennsylvania children attend high-quality, public pre-k—representing just 19 percent of the almost 297,000 3-and 4-year olds in the state.[34]
- 126,000 children were eligible for state-funded pre-K in 2013 and were not served.[35]
- Including private providers that employ trained teachers and meet other quality benchmarks, only 31 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to high-quality pre-k.[36]
- Overall, 204,486 Pennsylvania children do not have access to high-quality pre-k.[37]

States Know Early Learning Works

States recognize the benefits of high-quality early learning programs. In the past decade, the percentage of four-year-olds served in state preschool programs nationwide doubled, from 14 to 28 percent.[39] But many of Pennsylvania's neighboring states make high-quality pre-k available to even higher percentages. While only 25 percent of Pennsylvania's four-year-olds have access to high-quality pre-k, 55 percent of those in New York have access, while the numbers in New Jersey are 35 percent, in Maryland 43 percent, and in West Virginia, 85 percent of four-year-olds have access.[40]

Pre-kindergarten has received support from both sides of the political aisle. In 2013, at least 25 states—13 with Republican leadership and 12 with Democratic leadership—proposed and/or signed into law expansions of pre-k.[41] This trend continued in 2014, with increases for pre-k funding passed in at least 24 states, again with both Republican and Democratic leadership.



In its 2013-2014 state budget, Pennsylvania—under the leadership of Governor Tom Corbett—enacted a 5.4 percent increase to the Pre-Counts program to bring funding to $87.2 million and a 5.1 percent increase to the Head Start Supplemental Assistance program, which brought funding to $39.1 million.

Funding for Pre-K Counts was increased by $10 million to $97.2 million in the current 2014-2015 state budget, to serve about 13,600 children, while the Head Start Supplemental Assistance program was level funded at $39.1 million to serve about 4,800 children in very low income families.

Demonstrated Crime Prevention and Economic Benefits

A well-respected, independent cost-benefit analysis of more than 20 different studies of pre-kindergarten programs showed that pre-k can return, on average, a "profit" (economic benefits minus costs) to society of over $26,000 for every child served.[42] Applying these benefits to the 56,000 children currently served in high-quality pre-k in Pennsylvania, our state could reap a return of more than $1.4 billion over the lifetime of these children. These economic benefits accrue due largely to reductions in the cost of future crime and increases in participants' future wages, as well as decreases in other costs to society, such as children being held back in school or receiving special education. Other estimates of benefits are much higher. Clearly, pre-k works and more than pays for itself.

A Different Path for Our State

We now have an opportunity to increase the number of children served in voluntary high-quality early education, as well as enhance program quality. In his 2015-2016 budget proposal, Governor Tom Wolf has proposed a $120 million increase in early education funding, with $100 million for Pre-K Counts and $20 million for Head Start Supplemental. This would increase the number of children served by 14,000: 11,600 in Pre-K Counts and 2,400 in Head Start. Using the above cost-benefit analysis, **this proposal could save Pennsylvania over $350 million over the lifetime of the children who participate in these high-quality pre-k programs.** These benefits would accrue for each new cohort of children served by high-quality pre-k.

Pennsylvania law enforcement leaders applaud this effort. However, even with the additional 14,000 children served, there would still be approximately 112,000 at-risk children eligible for state-funded pre-K who will not have access.[43] Serving these children could yield an additional $2.9 billion in savings.

Overall, even with the proposed increase, approximately 190,000 Pennsylvania children will still not have access to high-quality pre-k. Research shows that while disadvantaged children derive the most benefit, high-quality pre-k also has positive impacts on middle-class children.[44] Our goal should therefore be to offer it to all children in the Commonwealth. High-quality pre-k is a solid investment in our state's future.

As law enforcement leaders, our job is to put those who commit serious crimes behind bars in Pennsylvania. **But we *all* agree that a better and less expensive way to stop crime going forward is to prevent as many young children as possible from growing up to become involved in crime in the first place.**

If Pennsylvania invests wisely now in more and better pre-kindergarten opportunities for its disadvantaged children, thousands of children can become successful, productive adults, instead of individuals who too often cost taxpayers dearly. When we support what works for our disadvantaged children, we put them—and our state—on a different, safer path. It's time to invest more in what works. Pennsylvania deserves nothing less.

Endnotes

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PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE
105 N. Front Street, Suite 305
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Ph: 717-233-1520

www.FightCrime.org/PA

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