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Gov. Wolf Joined by Advocates and Legislative Members to Celebrate Wolf Administration's Increased Investments in Early Childhood Education

Reading, PA - Governor Tom Wolf today was joined by advocates and legislative members to celebrate the \$30 million increase in early childhood education funding in the state budget at the YMCA in Reading. This new funding will allow an additional 3,270 children to enroll in the state's high-quality early learning programs.

The governor was joined by President and CEO of YMCA of Reading and Berks County Kim Johnson, United Way of Berks County President Tammy White, Chairwoman and CEO of C.H. Briggs Company Julia H. Klein, parent of child enrolled in early education Yessenia Vasquez, Sen. Judy Schwank and Rep. Manuel Guzman Jr.

"Early childhood education programs set students up for success," said Gov. Wolf. "When our children are successful in school and beyond, that sets our commonwealth up for success, too. That's why I've fought so hard to support early learning in Pennsylvania – doubling its investment – and this year's budget increased our investment in quality early childhood education once again."

Pennsylvania administers two early childhood learning programs: Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance (Head Start). Both programs ensure access to high-quality early learning programs for low-income families with children. Together with \$145 million in funding increases secured over the past six years for the programs, this year's \$30 million investment will increase funding for Pre-K Counts by 149% and funding for Head Start by 77% since 2014-15.

"Pennsylvania is ready to get back on track from COVID-19, and our investment in quality early childhood learning and child care programs is a crucial step toward that goal," said Gov. Wolf. "This year's budget does that by investing additional funds in early childhood education. By ensuring that high-quality early education and child care options are available for families who

need them we will help parents and caregivers return to the workforce with confidence that their children are receiving the care they need and deserve.”

The \$30 million early childhood education increase includes:

- \$25 million increase for Pre-K Counts, equating to an additional 2,800 children.
- \$5 million for Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, equating to an additional 470 children.

“A solid educational foundation during the early years of a child’s life prepares them for lifelong learning opportunities, which is why investing in high-quality early education is critical,” said Education Secretary Noe Ortega. “I am thankful to Governor Wolf and the General Assembly for their continued commitment to investing in early childhood education, which will support our learners now and our commonwealth for years to come.”

“One of the best investments we can make is in our children’s education, and it’s never too early to start,” said Sen. Schwank. “Pre-K Counts and Head Start programs provide our youngest Pennsylvanians learning opportunities that help prepare them for lifelong learning and achievement. These programs have numerous benefits for children, their families and communities. We know Pre-K Counts and Head Start work and increasing investments in these programs demonstrates the commonwealth’s commitment to ensuring every child has access to high quality early childhood education.”

“\$30 million dollars towards head start will have a tremendous impact on communities/cities of color like Reading,” said Rep. Guzman. “We know that every dollar invested in a child’s early years are the best and safest investment we can make as Pennsylvanians. I commend this first base hit, but there are still too many children who continue to fall through the cracks across our commonwealth. I look forward to getting back to work in September to deliver for the working class people of Reading and beyond.”

“This is an investment in our children and our education system, but it is also an investment in a better, more prosperous future for all Pennsylvanians,” said Gov. Wolf.

MEDIA CONTACT: Lyndsay Kensinger, ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov

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