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Governor Wolf Celebrates Investments in Early Learning and Funding Opportunities to Stabilize Child Care Industry

Erie, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today visited Gilson Child Development Center in Erie to celebrate the \$30 million increase in state funding to expand early childhood learning to more than 3,200 additional young children and the \$655 million available in federal funding to stabilize childcare providers during the pandemic.

“Studies show that children who learn in high-quality pre-k programs perform better in school and are more likely to graduate,” said Gov. Wolf. “We know that early childhood learning programs are good for children, especially those affected by socioeconomic risk factors, but they’re also good for families and our economy, too. Parents and caregivers rely on affordable, accessible childcare to go to work every day. When we ensure high-quality learning programs are available for children, we are making an economic investment in our communities.”

Since taking office, Gov. Wolf has increased funding for Pre-K Counts by 149% and for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (Head Start) by 77%. Both state programs ensure access to high-quality early learning programs for low-income families with children. The \$25 million increase this year allows Pre-K counts to serve an additional 2,900 children, while the additional \$5 million for Head Start will serve 300 more children and their families.

In addition to these historic investments in early childhood learning programs, the [Department of Human Services \(DHS\) recently announced](#) their plan to distribute \$655 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to stabilize Pennsylvania’s child care industry. Licensed child care providers are invited to submit applications for one-time grant funding that can be used to cover expenses and provide stabilization to this critical industry.

The governor was joined by Rina Irwin, CEO of Child Development Centers, Inc. (CDC) to discuss how more than 40 local families have benefitted from Gov. Wolf’s historic early learning investments, as well as how CDC centers were recently awarded approximately \$1.5 million in ARPA funding to continue their services throughout the pandemic.

“As Child Development Centers, Inc. remains committed to removing barriers between families and impactful care and education for their children, challenges associated with the threat of COVID-19 initially posed a financial hurdle in the advancement of our mission,”

said Irwin. “The early learning funding has enabled CDC to seamlessly persevere throughout the ongoing pandemic, immensely impacting our ability to serve families that rely on our programs. This support has allowed us to keep our doors open to families during times of uncertainty, ensure and improve the health and safety of our centers for children and staff, and maintain the employment of our tenacious employees.”

Licensed childcare providers are invited apply for funding through January 31, 2022. For more information on the grant funding and how to apply, visit [here](#). In addition to Rina Irwin, the governor was joined by Bill Jackson, president emeritus of United Way of the Erie County; Nick Scott, Jr., executive director of Scott Enterprises; and Liz Severence, a Pre-K Counts parent.

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