



Support Early Care and Education Funding for Pennsylvania in FY 2010

The benefits are clear -- comprehensive early learning and care services are critical to Pennsylvania's children and the state's economy. Children who participate in early education are more likely to graduate high school, be employed, and less likely to be arrested than their peers. Communities save money on special education, criminal justice and public assistance, and gain a more prepared workforce. Accessible, quality care supports low-income parents to find and sustain employment, strengthening the quality of life for our families.

Public Citizens for Children and Youth urges you to support the following programs in the 2009-2010 state budget:

- **Keystone STARS**
Keystone STARS offers families the ability to easily gauge child care program quality. Participating programs receive professional development, technical assistance and financial incentives to support continuous quality improvement. With nearly 4,300 programs enrolled in STARS, it is essential to maintain current funding levels for this program to assure a continuation in high quality early care.
- **Child Care Works**
Child Care Works provides financial assistance for child care so that low-income parents can continue to work and provide for their families. Today more than 15,000 children in Pennsylvania are waiting for subsidized child care; some have been waiting for up to nine months. Reducing the waiting list by 50 percent is crucial in 2009-2010 so that parents can return to work while their children develop school readiness skills.
- **Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts**
Pre-K Counts provides funding for 11,800 3- and 4-year olds to attend quality pre-kindergarten. Eligible children are considered at risk of school failure because of income, language (English is not the first language), or special needs. Only 20 percent of the state's eligible children currently have access to pre-kindergarten. Maintaining current funding for this proven program is critical to improving outcomes for Pennsylvania's children.
- **Head Start Supplemental Assistance**
Head Start Supplemental increases Pennsylvania's ability to serve children who are most at risk of academic failure. Maintaining current funding is essential to assisting our most disadvantaged families.

An investment in our children is an investment in Pennsylvania's future.