

# Childwatch

A publication of Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY)



## Helping to improve the lives and life chances of children, youth and families in Southeastern Pennsylvania

Summer 2015

### In This Issue

- Where Children Live May Determine Their Futures . . . . . 2
- Checking the Forecast for School Funding . . . . . 2
- School Play Raises the Curtain on School Funding . . . . . 3
- From the Suburbs to Harrisburg, PCCY Speaks up for our Region’s Children . . . . . 3
- Out of the Mouths of Babes . . . . . 4
- Next Mayor and Council on the Record to Support Kids . . . . . 4

### HEALTH INSURANCE IS A DREAM FOR THOUSANDS OF PENNSYLVANIA CHILDREN

**M**aria is the kind of girl who crawls into your lap and into your heart. She has a bright, playful smile and a round face adorned with wispy bangs. Belying her cheerful countenance is the fact that Maria is malnourished. She is small for her four years, and according to her mother, she is never hungry and has to be forced to eat. After driving an hour from their home to get to her annual check-up, her parents were advised to take her to a specialist to explore why she was not growing. When they learned the fee was \$150 they never made an appointment. Instead they just worry.



*Pennsylvania state law prohibits undocumented children from enrolling in CHIP, leaving 24,000 children uninsured.*

Maria’s story is heartbreaking, and sadly, there are thousands more children just like Maria who cannot get the medical care they need because they are undocumented. In fact, eight out of ten parents of undocumented children said they had to delay or forgo health care for their child because they could not afford the cost, according to PCCY’s new report, Fulfilling Pennsylvania’s Promise to Cover All Kids.

Pennsylvania law prohibits undocumented children from enrolling into the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). An estimated 24,000 children across Pennsylvania have few options when they get hurt or fall ill. Without health insurance, the cost of care, primarily specialty care can cost thousands of dollars.

Insuring every child is a public health imperative. Undocumented children in six states and localities are eligible for public health insurance. New York, Massachusetts, Washington D.C., Illinois, Washington state and California make health insurance available for all children including those who are undocumented.

Pennsylvania is the birthplace of the nation’s Children’s Health Insurance Program. Pennsylvania CHIP was so innovative that the federal government used it as the model for the national Children’s Health Insurance Program. For the sake of Maria, and thousands of undocumented children like her across the state, Pennsylvania state law must be amended to include all children in CHIP.

Maria had a high fever that peaked at 4 a.m. In a frenzy, her mother called a relative who recommended an over the counter remedy, and her father drove all over town in the middle of the night to find an open pharmacy. The memory of that night haunts them. What would they do if something like this happened again and the medicine didn’t work?

PCCY created a new initiative called Dream Care with our partner organizations in the Dream Care Coalition. You can learn more and read PCCY’s latest report at [www.pccy.org/dreamcare](http://www.pccy.org/dreamcare).

### PHILADELPHIA ON THE PATH TO UNIVERSAL PRE-K



*District Attorney Seth Williams joins PCCY Board Chair Leslie Russell Winder and children from Friends Child Care Center to support the Universal Pre-K ballot question.*

**M**ayoral candidate Jim Kenney received the most votes in Philadelphia’s May primary, but guess what came in a very close second? The answer: Universal Pre-K. The ballot question asking voters if Philadelphia should create a Commission to implement and fund high-quality pre-k for every three- and four-year-old child passed with nearly 80% of the vote, making it the most overwhelmingly approved ballot question since 2007.

In a city where two out of three children do not have access to high-quality pre-k, voters made it crystal clear they want universal pre-k, and they want it now. The 17 member Commission will present its final recommendations to Council in April, 2016. PCCY led the charge for the ballot measure and helped Council structure the Commission and looks forward to advising the Commission to ensure its plan makes pre-k possible for every child in the city.



## WHERE CHILDREN LIVE MAY DETERMINE THEIR FUTURES

**Z**ip codes. Those five little numbers at the end of an address. They're usually an afterthought. But those five numbers can mean the difference between a lifetime of success or struggles for children. Since Pennsylvania has the largest inequality gap between rich and poor school districts in the nation, zip codes determine the quality of education a child receives.

In Abington for instance, high school children can enroll in any one of the 42 advanced placement courses that prepare them for college. Just 15 miles away at Norristown High, which is about the same size as Abington High, students have access to only 12 advanced placement courses. So why the big difference in course offerings between the two schools?

In Norristown most of the children live in families struggling for the barest necessities. That's not the case in Abington. Unfortunately it costs much more to help a low-income child succeed than it does to prepare a middle class student for post high school success. That's why with nearly the same size budget, Norristown cannot afford all the extra supports needed to help its students cross the finish line.

State education funding formulas take the relative wealth and needs of school districts into account when determining how much state aid to distribute to districts. Since Pennsylvania does not have a funding formula, the disparities grow. For the upcoming academic year, Norristown had to eliminate one art, music and physical education teacher to balance its budget. Abington fortunately doesn't have to make that choice.

While the disparities between Abington and Norristown are unacceptable, they pale in comparison to the poorest district in the state which has only a third of what the wealthiest school district has to spend to educate its children.

PCCY helped form the statewide Campaign for Fair Education Funding which is pushing for the legislature to adopt a fair and adequate school funding formula along with the passage of the state budget. The Campaign is endorsed by 52 organizations and is growing every day. When this Campaign succeeds, Pennsylvania will be among the league of states that ensure that regardless of where a child may live they are afforded access to a high quality public education.

Abington	Norristown
7,600 Students	7,500 Students
\$140+ Million Budget	\$130+ Million Budget
42 Advanced Placement Courses	12 Advanced Placement Courses
2 in 10 Students Low-Income	7 in 10 Students Low-Income
2% English Language Learners	11% English Language Learners

## CHECKING THE FORECAST FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

**S**ummer's here and budget season is just heating up. As this newsletter goes to print state legislators continue negotiations on the state budget. Here's your guide for determining if the final budget agreement is a win for children:

### 1) Does it Restore the Education Cuts?

In March, the governor proposed a \$400 million increase in funding for public education. His proposal restores nearly the full amount of the 2010 cut to education which hit the poorest districts in the state the hardest causing districts to cut teachers, academic programs, arts education, pre-k, full-day kindergarten and increase class sizes.

Meanwhile, districts with some of the cuts restored would:

- maintain or expand pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs
- reduce class sizes in elementary school classes
- restore programs and personnel such as guidance counselors and librarians and restore extra-curricular programs

### 2) Does the Budget Agreement Enact the New School Funding Formula and Put it into Effect After the Cut is Restored in FY 2016/17?

The legislature's bipartisan Basic Education Funding Commission recently released a school funding formula that, if adopted, will direct more state aid to school districts that educate the poorest children in the state.

Assuming the legislature approves the new formula, the timing of when it goes into effect will be important. Under the governor's proposed budget, districts in southeastern Pennsylvania would receive \$186 million in new state funding for next year. If the formula is applied immediately, southeast school districts will receive \$46 million less. That's why it's important that the legislature first fill the hole created by

the 2010 cut before implementing the new formula. Doing so will help to begin to close Pennsylvania's worst-in-the nation equity gap between low-income and wealthy school districts.

### 3) Are New Investments in Early Childhood Education In the Budget?

The governor's budget proposal calls for \$120 million in new funding to expand Pre-K Counts and Head Start. The new investments will nearly double the number of children enrolled in publicly-supported, high-quality early learning programs and will make them available to 14,500 additional three-and-four year-old children. The research is clear; high-quality pre-k starts children on the path to success. It is critically important that the final budget agreement include \$120 million for early childhood education.

Measure	The Commission Proposes Every At Risk Child Count for An Additional Weight of:
Children living in acute poverty ( $\leq$ 100% federal poverty level)	0.6
Children living in poverty (100-185% federal poverty level)	0.3
Children who are English Language Learners	0.6
Children enrolled in charter schools	0.2
Additional weight - concentrated poverty (30%+ of students in SD in deep poverty)	0.3

If the answers to these three questions are yes, then the final budget will set the stage for a banner year for our kids.



## SCHOOL PLAY RAISES THE CURTAIN ON SCHOOL FUNDING

Ever see a play so good “not even Shakespeare could do it?” That’s what Joe Bruni, Superintendent of the William Penn School District had to say to the Delaware County Daily Times after seeing *School Play*, an original production commissioned by PCCY.



The cast of PCCY's *School Play* takes a bow following their performance at the premiere at the National Constitution Center.

The Philadelphia Inquirer helped us explain “why do a play?” “What we’re hoping to do with this play is build that collective sense of urgency, so we go from begrudging to inspired.”

PCCY premiered *School Play* to packed crowds at the National Constitution Center and thrilled audiences with a poignant, thought-provoking and, at times, humorous drama about our nation’s bedrock institution, public education.

Playwrights Seth Bauer and Arden Kass spent more than a year interviewing Pennsylvanians as the basis of the script for the play. Every word of the script comes from school students, parents, teachers, administrators and politicians. Here’s a sample of what they had to say: “There was a shift in administration – the new governor took office and the announcement was made of the

*budget intentions and huuuh ... oh my gosh... It was devastating.”*

*“Kids in this zip code, in this school district, are being deprived of opportunities and services that would be otherwise provided for them if we had the funds to do that.”*

*“I remember doing my chapter reading for science class and it said, ‘maybe with the technological advances, we’ll be able to land a man on the moon someday.’ Land a man on the moon someday? I pointed it out to my teacher who asked us to excuse him for a second and he apparently marched down to the principal’s office and was like, we need new books!”*

*“Pretty much every class has a smart board... There’s a projector in every single room. White boards. No, no chalkboards. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a chalkboard.”*

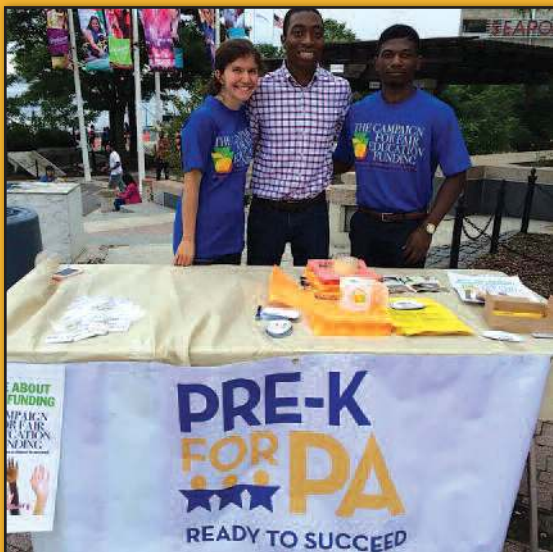
*School Play* purposely poses more questions than answers, yet a few important facts come through: students can excel if their schools expect it and can help them achieve, our education system is using 20th century tools and must evolve, and, above all, we are harming the next generation by failing to put in place reliable, sustainable and sufficient funds for our schools.

School districts, community theaters and houses of worship are staging *School Play*. Full and shortened versions of the script and all the production materials are available online. Please visit [www.pccy.org/schoolplay](http://www.pccy.org/schoolplay) to download them and put *School Play* on in your community.

## From the Suburbs to Harrisburg, PCCY Speaks up for our Region’s Children



PCCY organized about 50 young voters to take a bus to Harrisburg in April to tell legislators to support a fair funding formula for schools.



PCCY interns Tess Kerins, Abel McDaniels and Raheem Veal hosted a PCCY informational table at the Power 99 Peace on the Streets Festival at Penn’s Landing in June.



The drama of the school funding crisis took center stage in June when PCCY hosted readings of *School Play* in West Chester, Norristown, Philadelphia and here in Media.

### INVESTING IN PRE-K NOW PAYS OFF LATER

**70%**  
of Pennsylvania 3- and 4-year olds do not have access to high-quality pre-k.

RESEARCH SHOWS HIGH QUALITY PRE-K LEADS TO:

**7 More Months**  
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.

**31%**  
Less likely to need special education.

**51%**  
Less likely to be held back in Kindergarten.

**35%**  
Increase in high school graduation rates.

CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K ARE:

**70%**  
more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

**5X**  
more likely to become a chronic offender with 5 or more arrests

### INVEST IN PRE-K NOW, SAVE LATER

**\$120 million**  
Governor’s proposed increase for early childhood education =

**14,000**  
more children will have access to high-quality pre-k.

**\$350 million**  
in savings in corrections and other costs in the future.

Create infographics [info:am](http://info:am)



PCCY put smiles on the faces of 384 children by teaming up with 12 area dentists to provide free dental care to children at the 12th annual Give Kids a Smile Day last April.



## OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

Students from across the Philadelphia School District turned their arts instruction into school advocacy. For seven weeks straight, students joined teachers and parents at City Hall to appeal directly to Council members for \$105 million in local funding for the Philadelphia School District. These students shared with Council members the love they have for arts teachers and urged Council to give the schools the tools needed for success. City Council members heard their message loud and clear and approved millions more in new recurring revenue for city schools.

The students are all participants in PCCY's Picasso Project, an arts oriented mini-grant program that gives students access to hands-on arts instruction and the opportunity to advocate for arts education funding.

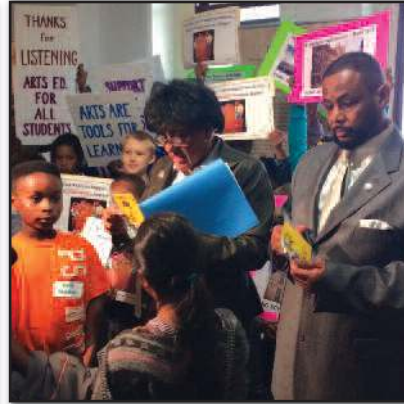
To learn more about the Picasso Project visit [www.pccy.org/picassoproject](http://www.pccy.org/picassoproject).



Students from Powel Elementary and The Workshop School march outside City Council Chambers to call for \$105 million for their schools.



Students from Chester Arthur Elementary made a banner to tell City Council to "Fund Our Schools."



Children from Powel Elementary School give "worry bead" bracelets to Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell and Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. to ease their worries about funding schools.

## NEXT MAYOR AND COUNCIL ON THE RECORD TO SUPPORT KIDS

Wouldn't it be great if the next Mayor made a pledge to improve the lives of children? You bet it would! That's why PCCY formed a coalition of 29 organizations to back the Pledge for Philadelphia's Children that called for candidates for Mayor to make very specific commitments to how city resources and clout will be used to make the lives of children better.

Fortunately the candidates that counted, those that won the Primary election, signed the pledge without hesitation. Their signature commits them to:

- Direct sufficient city funding to city schools and align city resources to support the District
- Achieve Universal Pre-K by 2020
- Guarantee that every teen has a summer job and that families can be assured to earn a decent minimum wage consistent with the increased wage rates in other major cities
- Expand childhood hunger prevention programs
- Increase health care access and trauma-informed health and counseling practices
- Create and fund an Office of Children's Services Integration
- Provide greater access to museums, sports venues, and upgraded health and recreation centers

The Philadelphia Inquirer published a commentary piece about the pledge co-authored by Donna Cooper and Marcus Allen, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters. They hit home the need to ensure the pledge is realized, "The pledge does not end with candidate signatures; that is where it begins. Now that it has been signed, the organizations behind the pledge are readying themselves to make sure words are turned into actions."

To read the full pledge, please visit [www.pccy.org/pledge](http://www.pccy.org/pledge).

Join Our Network Online: [www.pccy.org/joinus](http://www.pccy.org/joinus)



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