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PARTNERING TO PREPARE: EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

FIELD HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING PARTNERING TO PREPARE OUR CHILDREN, FOCUSING ON EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

APRIL 6, 2010 (Morrisville, PA)

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PARTNERING TO PREPARE: EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2010

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Morrisville, PA.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:42 a.m. at Morrisville School District, 550 West Palmer Street, Morrisville, PA, Hon. Robert Casey, Jr., presiding.

Present: Senator Casey.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASEY

Senator CASEY. Well, good afternoon, almost.

First of all, I want to thank everyone for being here and call to order this hearing, which is the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee of the U.S. Senate. And in particular today we're going to be examining a number of questions, but here's the overall theme for today, which is, "Partnering to Prepare: Expanding Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education."

I do want to thank everyone for taking the time to be with us. I thank our witnesses, that I will be introducing individually, thank them for their presence, their testimony; in many cases, their scholarship and work in this field for many, many years. I want to thank the students, who are in the back of the room, for their presence here and listening to this testimony, which is about our future and about the kind of country we want to create because of the investments we should be making in early childhood education.

I do want to thank the Morrisville School District and all those who made this possible, especially in light of the time change.

I'm not going to provide a long opening statement. I just want to make a couple of comments, so we can get right to our witnesses. I was saying to our witnesses, a couple of minutes ago, one of the best parts about this hearing is that you'll hear from them and not from me. I'll have some questions and some comments, but I think it's very important that you hear from people that are in the trenches, so to speak, people who have substantial experience in education and, in particular, experience in early education and what it means to a child, what it means to that child's family, and, of course, what it means to our society and our economy.

The way I look at these issues is very simple but, I think, very direct, and it is this, that every child born in America—every single

child born in America—has a light inside them. And for some children, that light will burn so brightly you won't be able to see it, it'll be so bright. It'll be blinding, because that child has advantages of one kind or another, the advantages of their circumstances, their family background, the condition into which they're born, and their own ability and aptitude. So, for some children, that light is so bright it's hard to even imagine.

For other children, the light inside them burns a little less brightly because of circumstances beyond their control or because of other reasons.

Our job, especially those who are elected to public office—no matter what office, no matter what level of government, one of the basic and fundamental obligations you have is to do everything possible to make sure that that light inside a child burns brightly to its full potential. For some, that potential will be boundless. For others, that potential will be more limited. But, whatever the limit of that potential, whatever the reach of that light, we have to make sure that that child is achieving that, and that that child's potential is realized.

One of the best ways to do that is to make sure that we make investments in early education. I believe if we do at least three things to help our children, no matter who they are—and this is not limited to age or circumstance or income, but especially for low income children—if we give them early learning opportunities, like we're here to discuss today, if we make sure they have enough to eat and have nutrition, and third, if we give all the best that we can when it comes to healthcare.

Fortunately, we've made dramatic advancements in the last 10 to 15 years in healthcare; the Children's Health Insurance Program being the main example in that part of our strategy.

Obviously, on nutrition and food security we've got a long way to go for a lot of children; too many of them don't have enough to eat.

The issue that brings us together today, which is early education. We have tremendous examples, that you'll hear about today, in local communities across Pennsylvania and across the country. But, candidly, we're not doing enough. We don't have a national strategy for early education. It doesn't mean you won't recognize and be faithful to local control and local traditions and local designing of early education programs. But, we need a strategy that is national in scope, so that we can work with and reward States like Pennsylvania that are making tremendous advancements in early education.

So, to that end, focusing on early education, I am honored to be able to join this panel of witnesses. And what I'll do is provide a very brief introduction of each witness, one after another, and then go to their testimony, so you'll be introduced to all of them at one time.

First of all, I want to thank and commend Dr. Elizabeth Hammond Yonson, the superintendent here at Morrisville School District. Her testimony offers a background on the school district here in Morrisville, and an overview of the efforts to provide high quality pre-Kindergarten education.

Next, we'll have Melissa Bowman. Melissa currently teaches kindergarten at Morrisville and has taught pre-K in both Philadelphia and Morrisville.

Next, we'll have—Michele Fina, branch director of the Morrisville YMCA, which runs a pre-K program there. She'll be third.

And then, fourth, Dr. Ackerman will provide a perspective on research, and we'll go to Dr. Ackerman's presentation in PowerPoint in front of us here.

Next, Joan Benso, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, someone I've known a long, long time, someone who's been laboring in this vineyard, so to speak—I'll use a scriptural reference there—for many, many years, and she has been a tremendous leader, and recognized around the country for her leadership, in child advocacy, especially on the issues that we're talking about today.

And, finally, Todd Klunk, the acting deputy secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. The office is headed by Harriet Dichter, another person I've known a long time, who has given us great leadership on these issues at the Department of Public Welfare and prior to her service in State government.

So, that is our list of witnesses. And I'll make sure that we try to keep within our 5-minute rule. We'll be close to that rule. I have a gavel; I'll try not to use it. Our witnesses have promised to be true to that admonition.

So, we'll start with Dr. Yonson, and then we'll go from there to our other witnesses.

Doctor.

ELIZABETH YONSON, SUPERINTENDENT, MORRISVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT, MORRISVILLE, PA

Ms. YONSON. Thank you, Senator Casey, and welcome.

My name is Dr. Elizabeth Hammond Yonson. I am the superintendent of the Morrisville Borough School District in Bucks County. I have been the superintendent for 6 years. Additionally, I serve as the co-chair of Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts Advisory Council, as a member of Pennsylvania's Early Learning Council, and the United Way's Success by Six Council. As a superintendent, I believe early childhood education is critically important and helps us better educate the children in my district as well as the children throughout Pennsylvania and across our Nation.

When people think of Bucks County, they often think of bucolic pastures and wealthy school districts, but that is not the case in the southern part of our county. In my school district, 52 percent of our children receive free or reduced school lunch. People sometimes believe our Commonwealth's poor only live in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh; that simply isn't true. There are plenty of children living in poverty across Pennsylvania. Some of our children are the epitome of "at risk." Our special education enrollment is 20 percent, well above the State average.

The PSSA scores in our primary grades have improved significantly in the past few years. I credit this to our full-day kindergarten program, which began 4 years ago, and our 4-year-old pre-K program, which began 3 years ago. Nearly 40 percent of our students in 11th grade scored below proficient on their PSSA reading

test in 2008 and 2009. I can't help but wonder, if these 11th-grade students had had a quality pre-K experience, whether the scores on these assessments would have been higher.

Nearly 50 percent of children under 5 in my district live in families earning 200 percent or less of the Federal poverty level. These families cannot afford quality pre-Kindergarten, and many of them do not receive the kind of developmentally appropriate learning activities they need to build the vocabulary, pre-academic, and social skills they will need in kindergarten. When they get to kindergarten they are behind their peers, and often stay behind throughout their school careers. If we can reach these children early with quality pre-Kindergarten, they would never get behind.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides a quality pre-Kindergarten experience at no cost to their families. These families have the option of half day or full-day pre-Kindergarten in schools, Head Start, or child care programs, or nursery schools. A part of this quality experience includes parent involvement so the child's learning can continue at home. That is exactly the sort of program our families need.

Prior to opening our pre-K, my kindergarten teachers told me they could identify the children who did not have a preschool experience. They also told me that they could identify the children who had a quality pre-K experience and children who did not attend a quality preschool. I believed strongly that children needed a quality preschool program because of what our teachers were telling us, but also because studies show that at least half of the eventual achievement gap already exists in kindergarten. Students who start behind are at a higher risk of staying behind, dropping out, and eventually getting into trouble with the law.

When I became superintendent of Morrisville, 6 years ago, one of my goals was to improve the quality of the early education our students received. All of our Accountability Block Grant funds were invested into full-day kindergarten so that all of our students would be able to have a full-day kindergarten experience. Before ABG, only one of our kindergarten classes was full-day. Now, all four offer full-day kindergarten. I would have loved to begin a quality pre-Kindergarten program with our ABG funds, but there was no money left.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is a godsend for districts like mine who want to invest in quality pre-Kindergarten but do not have the resources. Using these funds for a dedicated funding stream for pre-K is more valuable to us than adding it to the rest of the Accountability Block Grant because, through Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, these resources go where they're really needed rather than swallowed up by other programs or operating supports.

Because Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is fully funded by the State, I don't have to pull from our budget. I can serve children who can most benefit from pre-Kindergarten. Now they don't have to start behind.

Four years ago, Morrisville Borough, Bristol Borough, and Bristol Township School Districts collaborated to write a Pre-K Counts Public-Private Partnership Grant. We used the grant, from the public-private partnership, to invest in our pre-Kindergarten partners through coaching, professional development, and parent lit-

eracy activities. The public-private partnership helped me build relationships with our community-based programs, such as Head Start, child care, and early intervention, that I never had before. Because of these relationships, we developed transition activities between our elementary schools and community pre-K providers so that, when children come to kindergarten, they're comfortable in the school environment.

Three years ago, our school district applied for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, in partnership with the Morrisville YMCA and Head Start, and in cooperation with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. We have served 76 3-year-olds at YMCA and 61 4-year-olds in our primary elementary school building in the past 3 years. Ten percent of these slots are dedicated to children with special needs, and priority enrollment has been given to children who are on the waiting list for Head Start services. I am delighted to think of the great start we have given these children because of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

I asked my kindergarten and first-grade teachers to reflect on the progress of their students who attend our pre-K program. The following are comments they shared with me.

A first-grade teacher told me,

> "The six students I currently have who attended our pre-K are doing very well. Their overall performance is great. They not only pick up material quickly, but I find that I usually need to find more challenging activities for them. They are above level in math and reading. When I think back to the first few weeks of school, these students, for the most part, seemed easily acclimated to the school environment and routine. Three of the students are reading at third-grade reading levels, two are reading at second-grade levels, and one is on level."

A kindergarten teacher said the following: "K"—I'm only going to use initials.

> "K is a true leader and an enthusiastic learner who works hard to complete tasks neatly and on time. J is a very mature student who loves learning. He was well prepared for kindergarten compared to his peers. He is the best-behaved and most-focused student in my class. Y enjoys writing stories. He has excellent spelling and Kid Writing skills. They are all above level in reading, writing, and math."

Another kindergarten teacher told me that,

> "It is really wonderful to have students in kindergarten who were part of our pre-K program. They begin the year with excitement and fantastic readiness skills. They understand the general expectations of playing and working together in small groups. They have practice with sitting on the carpet quietly and listening to books read aloud. These skills can be even more important than academic skills, because they set the stage for learning. Providing this experience for children, who would otherwise be unable to participate, is truly a gift in preparing them for a successful school experience.

Additionally, my students have strong academic skills. They are able to make, label, and extend patterns. They can count objects

and write and order numbers. They can create graphs when given data. They identify coins by name, and can count to 100, and beyond, independently. They can recognize all the sight words that have been taught. They use these words regularly in their Kid Writing Journals. Some of the children can even identify words that have not been introduced, applying phonetic skills that have been taught."

One of the first-grade teachers told me that one of her students who attended our pre-K has already met the end-of-the-year first-grade goals, last marking period, which was at the end of January.

Seventy-one percent of our students who attended our pre-K program are above level in reading; 14 percent are on level; and 14 percent are slightly below. These youngsters have been receiving additional supports and are making excellent progress. The pre-K teacher alerted the kindergarten teachers of the needs of these few youngsters, which allowed the teacher to begin the process having the children screened, upon entering kindergarten, so that they could receive their needed services. Students have also worked with our gifted teacher for enrichment purposes and are being evaluated for the gifted program.

I received an e-mail, just this morning, to let me know one of the teachers—one of the first-grade teachers noted—wanted to ask if we had noticed that a very high number of children are being tested for our enrichment program. So, I thought that that was wonderful—that was a wonderful testament.

Morrisville School District's pre-K program has proven that providing a quality pre-Kindergarten experience for at-risk children allows them to begin school on the same level playing field as their peers from more privileged backgrounds. I urge Congress to support funding early childhood programs as they reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Our children deserve early childhood programs so that they can start school ready to learn and ready to succeed.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much, Doctor.

Melissa Bowman.

STATEMENT OF MELISSA BOWMAN, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER, MORRISVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT, MORRISVILLE, PA

Ms. BOWMAN. My name is Melissa Bowman. I have had the privilege of teaching in several early childhood classrooms over the past 11 years. It is extremely rewarding to work with young children. I am always amazed by how much progress a young child can make in one short school year.

My first teaching experience was in a first-grade class in a Philadelphia public school. A few children in my class attended a Head Start program that was housed in the same school. The program definitely made a positive difference for the students who were lucky enough to attend. However, most of the children in my class did not attend any type of preschool program. They had missed that ideal window for learning. Many came into my first-grade class without the simple knowledge of letters or sounds. Several children showed frustration, and behavior problems ensued. Unfortunately the challenge of catching up for these children was a near impossible task.

My next teaching experience was as a kindergarten teacher in a wonderful and very high-quality childcare center. The children in this school often had several years of preschool experience before coming to my kindergarten classroom. The children in this program flourished. Parents often came back with reports of how their children were showing advanced achievement in their elementary schools.

Three years I ago, I came to Morrisville as the pre-K teacher. I was given the wonderful opportunity and resources to help build an exceptional high-quality Pre-K Counts program in Morrisville. Parents were thrilled to have this program available. Several parents expressed that if it had not been for this program, their child would not have attended pre-K, because of the great cost. For many of the children in my pre-K class, this was their first school experience. I set high goals for my class, and the students exceeded my expectations. The children learned letters, numbers, and sight words, as well as how to listen attentively and work cooperatively with others. By the end of the year, they had not only made a huge amount of progress cognitively, but also socially. They left my class ready to be the leaders and role models in their new kindergarten classrooms.

At the end of the school year last year, there was a great amount of uncertainty about whether or not the pre-K program would have funding to continue in Morrisville. For that reason, I requested a change to a kindergarten position. This year in my kindergarten class, I am lucky enough to have four students who were in my pre-K class last year. All four students are reading and performing above the expected level, with two of the students reading on a third-grade reading level.

After talking with the three other kindergarten teachers in the district, we all agree that children who attend a quality pre-K program are very easy to spot. They come to school with the understanding of how a classroom works and with the knowledge needed to thrive with our fast-paced kindergarten curriculum.

It is well known that the first 5 years of a child's life are critical for learning and brain development. What a child learns during these early years will directly impact what he or she is capable of learning in the future. The benefit of quality pre-K programs has been clearly evident to me throughout my teaching. Young children are capable of learning an extraordinary amount, if given the opportunity. Pre-K programs are essential in assuring school success for all children.

Senator CASEY. Melissa, thank you very much.

Ms. BOWMAN. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. And next, we have Michele Fina. Did I pronounce "Fina" correctly?

Ms. FINA. You did.

Senator CASEY. OK.

Ms. FINA. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Twice, or once?

Ms. FINA. No, you did it twice, both perfectly.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

[Laughter.]

Good staff work.

STATEMENT OF MICHELE FINA, BRANCH DIRECTOR, MORRISVILLE YMCA, MORRISVILLE, PA

Ms. FINA. My name is Michele Fina. I'm the branch director of the Morrisville YMCA, a childcare center located here in Morrisville Borough. I have been with the Morrisville Y since 1992. I currently serve as board president for the Bucks County Quality Child Care Coalition, our local community engagement group. I also serve on the Bucks County Pre-K Counts Grantees workgroup, and I am a member of the Morrisville Rotary Club. The YMCA has been involved with Pre-K Counts since the original public-private partnership, and we continue to partner with the Morrisville Borough School District in Pre-K Counts.

Our current center enrollment is 125. Approximately 64 percent of our children are subsidized by Child Care Works. Another 5 to 10 percent receive YMCA scholarships. We have 18 full-day preschool children funded by the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program.

For the past several years, we applied for an expansion grant to provide half day services to approximately 10 children that were on our waiting list. Unfortunately, there weren't resources in Pennsylvania for that grant.

Many of the children in our community have identified risk factors, including poverty, English as a second language, and special needs.

To participate in Pre-K Counts, childcare programs must meet the criteria of STAR 3 or 4 in Pennsylvania's voluntary, quality improvement and recognition system, known as Keystone STARS. I am very proud to say that our center earned a STAR 4 on March 24.

[Applause.]

Reaching this level of quality helps ensure that all of our children will have a high quality pre-Kindergarten experience, with competent teachers and assistants in an environment that includes positive relationships, small class size, and a curriculum that aligns with the Pennsylvania early learning standards. Centers are required annually to complete self-assessments using the Environmental Rating Scale, better known as ERS, and then independent ERS assessors determine if the site has met the 5.5 to 7.0 scores necessary. My staff can tell you how absolutely nerve-wracking it is to have a stranger enter your room and scrutinize everything, including your space and furnishings, your personal care routines, language and reasoning, the classroom activities, the staff-and-children and staff-and-parent interactions, schedules, and staff development. I'm also very proud to say that our Pre-K Counts classroom scored 6.07 out of a possible 7 during our December 2009 independent ERS evaluation.

Our center has been involved in Keystone STARS since its inception, and for most of those years we were a STAR 1 or 2, but then we realized that, in order to provide a high quality program and continue to participate in the PA Pre-K Counts program, we would have to move to STAR 3, which is the most involved and hardest step in the Keystone STARS program. Most staff needed higher education, and for some, it meant returning to school, 20 years after graduating from high school; little scary for some people. I decided if teachers needed to be role models for the children in their

care, then I needed to inspire staff to pursue higher education, so I returned to school for my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education.

The majority of our teachers and assistants have been with us for 5 to 23 years, our staff attrition rate is very low. We lose and add approximately one or two employees each year. Nearly 50 percent of our employees are pursuing certificates and degrees, and several others already hold associate or bachelor degrees. Four years ago, we didn't have staff as competent or educated.

So, what does this mean for us? It means that the PA Pre-K Counts and Keystone STARS improve, and continue to improve, our entire program, and everyone has benefited from our participation. Both programs provide dedicated resources and a support system with technical assistance and funding for everything from supplies to professional development. The children, their families, my staff, and all of our community stakeholders have gained. The bottom line is, the children enter school prepared to learn.

Many of the children who enter our Pre-K Counts program as 3-year-olds transition to Morrisville School District's pre-K program when they're 4. I believe we share a unique and supportive relationship with the school district, and we work very closely to assure that our programs are aligned.

Sixteen months ago, when the school district closed one of their elementary schools due to a mechanical failure, Dr. Yonson called me on a Sunday and asked if the PA Pre-K Counts class could move to our building. Of course my answer was yes, and their class was housed in our building from December to June, with Miss Melissa Bowman as the teacher. That's the kind of partnership that we share.

The strength in the Pre-K Counts program rests in the fact that we work together to achieve these goals. We use the same standards, staff qualifications, and curriculum as school district classrooms, other childcare centers, Head Start programs, and private kindergartens. This diverse delivery system supports families and communities and gives families choices. Ultimately, it is the early learning standards which connect to the K through 12th-grade curriculum, providing a seamless path from infancy through high school.

Why is quality early education important? Research indicates that 90 percent of the brain is developed by the time the child is 5 years old. We know that the early years are crucial for development. Quality programs that participate in PA Pre-K Counts and Keystone STARS follow stringent standards every day.

And just to give you an example: One evening I was walking through my center, checking to make sure that all the lights were turned out, and I heard this whispering in one of the classrooms and thought, "Oh my goodness, someone left a child in the classroom." I walked into the classroom and saw a dad sitting on the floor in the reading corner, with his son between his legs, reading a book to his child. And as he read the book, he was following the words with his fingers. He got up quietly after he was done, and he said to me, "My son just wanted me to read his favorite book to him, because he wants me to buy it for him for Christmas." If we could get through to that parent and that child, not a parent

that you would ever expect to be doing this, then we've gotten through to many, many more families.

What we need, though, is more funding. Childcare centers need Keystone STARS. And families need programs like PA Pre-K Counts. Strong State and Federal funding partnerships are needed to provide programs that help children to be ready to learn and succeed in school.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fina follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHELE FINA

Welcome Senator Casey. My name is Michele Fina and I am the branch director of the Morrisville YMCA, a child care center located in Morrisville Borough. I have been with the Morrisville Y since 1992. I currently serve as board president of the Bucks County Quality Child Care Coalition, our local community engagement group. I serve on the Bucks County Pre-K Grantees Work Group. In addition, I am a member of the Morrisville Rotary Club. The Morrisville YMCA has been involved with Pre-K Counts since the original Public Private Partnership and we continue to partner with the Morrisville Borough School District in PA Pre-K Counts.

Our current enrollment is 125. Approximately 64 percent of our children are subsidized by Child Care Works. Another 5–10 percent receives YMCA scholarships. We have 18 full-day preschool children funded through Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. For the past several years we have applied for an expansion grant to provide half day services to approximately 10 children on our waiting list. Unfortunately, there weren't enough resources in Pennsylvania for that grant. Many of the children in our community have identified risk factors including poverty, English as a second language, and special needs.

To participate in PA Pre-K Counts, child care programs must meet the criteria of STAR 3 or 4 in Pennsylvania's voluntary, quality improvement and recognition system Keystone STARS. I am proud to say that our center earned a STAR 4 on March 24.

Reaching this level of quality helps insure that all of our children will have a high quality pre-kindergarten experience with competent teachers and assistants in an environment that includes positive relationships, small class size, and a curriculum that aligns with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. Centers are required annually to complete self-assessments using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and then independent ERS assessors determine if the site has met the 5.5 to 7 point scores necessary. My staff can tell you how nerve wracking it is to have a stranger enter your room and scrutinize space and furnishings, personal care routines, language and reasoning, classroom activities, staff and children and staff and parent interactions, schedules, and staff development. I am proud to say that our Pre-K Counts classroom scored 6.07 out of a possible 7.0 during our December 2009 independent ERS evaluations.

Our center has been involved in Keystone STARS for at least 10 years. For many of the first 6 years, we were a STAR 2, but we realized that in order to insure that we were providing high quality programming and to continue to participate in PA Pre-K Counts program we would need to move to STAR 3, which is the most involved and hardest step in the Keystone STARS program.

More staff needed higher education and for some, it meant returning to school more than 20 years after graduating from high school. I decided if teachers need to be role models for the children in their care, then I needed to inspire staff to pursue higher education. So I returned to school for my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education.

The majority of our teachers and assistants have been with us for 5–23 years. Our staff attrition rate is low and we lose and add approximately one or two employees each year. Nearly 50 percent of our employees are pursuing certificates and degrees and several others already hold associate or bachelor degrees. Four years ago, we did not have staff as competent or educated.

What does this mean for us? PA Pre-K Counts and Keystone STARS improve and continue to improve our entire program and everyone has benefited from our participation. Both programs provide dedicated resources and a support system with technical assistance and funding for everything from supplies to professional development. The children and their families, my staff, and all our community stakeholders have gained. Children enter school prepared to learn.

Many of the children who enter our PA Pre-K Counts program as 3-year-olds, transition to Morrisville School District's pre-kindergarten PA Pre-K Counts program. I believe we share a unique and supportive relationship with the school district and we work very closely to assure that our programs are aligned. Sixteen months ago, when the school district closed one of the elementary schools due to a mechanical failure, Dr. Yonson called me on a Sunday and asked if the PA Pre-K Counts class could move to our building. Of course, my answer was yes and their class was housed in our building from December to June. That is the kind of partnership we share.

The strength in the PA Pre-K Counts Program rests in the fact that we work together to achieve the same goals. We use the same standards, staff qualifications, and curriculum as school district classroom, other child care centers, Head Start programs and private kindergartens. This diverse delivery system supports families and communities and gives families choices. Ultimately, it is the early learning standards which connect to the K–12th grade curriculum providing a seamless path from infancy through high school.

Why is quality early education important? Research indicates that 90 percent of the brain is developed by the time a child is 5 years old. We know the early years are crucial for development. Quality programs that participate in PA Pre-K Counts and Keystone STARS, especially those at STAR 3 and 4 levels, follow stringent standards every day. Programs strive to provide developmentally appropriate activities to help children learn. ERS assessments provide valuable information for child care sites on professional development or programmatic changes that need to be made. And in turn we use child assessments like Work Sampling to determine if a child needs support in a particular area, if a child is making progress, and what we may need to work on next.

We work hard to create a family atmosphere within our center. Our goal is to help families feel comfortable entrusting their children to our care. Families are encouraged to participate in our events, to belong to our Family Group, and to become involved in their child's education.

I was walking through our center early one evening, checking to make sure that lights were turned off and I heard whispers coming from one of the empty rooms. Immediately, I thought, someone left a child alone in the room. I walked into the room and saw one of our fathers sitting in front of a child-sized sofa in the library/reading corner with his son in front of him. It was obvious the dad couldn't fit on the furniture. Dad read the book to him, using his finger to follow the print on the page while his son listened to every word. I wouldn't have expected this dad to be taking the time to sit on the floor and read. When dad was finished, he quietly stood up and said, "My son wanted me to read his favorite book to him because he wants me to buy it for him for Christmas." This is only one story, but if we reached this child and father, I know we reached many, many more. We read with our children many times each day and hope that they will grow to love the words and stories and develop the skills that are necessary for literacy.

We need both State and Federal support to continue providing quality early care and education for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Child care centers need Keystone STARS. Families need programs like PA Pre-K Counts. Without these programs, children may not reach their potential. The opportunity to participate in high quality, community-based early care and education programs and strong partnerships between programs and schools helps smooth transitions to kindergarten. Child care centers work hard to uphold and maintain quality through Keystone STARS 3 or 4 designations or accreditation through the National Association for the Education of the Young Children (NAEYC). Strong State and Federal funding partnerships are needed to provide programs that help children to be ready to learn and succeed in school.

Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thanks so much. And I want to thank Michele for adjusting to the time.

I want her to know, and I want all the witnesses to know, something I should have said at the beginning, is that your full testimony will be in the record. So, if for some reason you don't cover a section, it'll still be in the record.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Ackerman.

STATEMENT OF DEBRA J. ACKERMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR RESEARCH, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH, RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

Ms. ACKERMAN. Before I start, I apologize to all of you in the audience. I have a PowerPoint presentation to talk about the research I'm going to be sharing, but it is, unfortunately, behind all of you. So, if you want to turn around, and for the students, in particular, I don't know how many of you are going to be able to see it, but even if you want to come forward this way, that would be just fine.

Good afternoon. My name is Debra Ackerman, and I am the associate director for research at the National Institute for Early Education Research, at Rutgers University, which is in New Jersey. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

What I would like to share with you today is a brief overview of the compelling research based on the benefits of high-quality pre-K programs, particularly for disadvantaged children. I will do this by highlighting the significant outcomes from research on four pre-K programs. In addition, to help inform future Federal efforts in expanding access to pre-K to additional low-income children, I'll focus on the critical program elements that contributed to the quality of these programs.

The evidence we have on the short- and long-term outcomes of high-quality pre-K come from a variety of rigorous research studies. However, the three most famous studies are those of the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry Preschool programs.

Each of these programs served children who were considered to be at risk for school failure. As you can see from the slide, the Abecedarian and Perry Programs were very small in comparison to the Child-Parent Center Program, which was offered by the Chicago Public Schools. The programs also differed in terms of the ages served and whether they had a half- or a full-day program.

However, all three programs were similar, in that they used highly qualified teachers. In addition, because classrooms were staffed by a teacher and assistant, their staff-child ratios were 1 to 8.5, or better. Despite the differences in schedule, each program has demonstrated remarkable academic benefits for enrollees in comparison to the outcomes for children who did not participate in the program.

We're going to begin with the small Abecedarian program. As you can see from the slide, if you look at the top, just one-third of enrollees were subsequently placed in special education, versus about half of the no-program group. In terms of grade repetition, which means you're left back and you need to repeat a grade, again, about one-third of enrollees repeated a grade, in comparison to 65 percent of those who did not participate in the program. Next we look at high school graduation rates. The difference in those rates were 67 percent versus 51 percent. Finally, while a full third of participants went on to a 4-year college, only 13 percent of the no-program group had a similar outcome.

We see similar results when comparing academic outcomes for those enrolled in the Chicago Child-Parent Center program. Half of the program enrollees graduated from high school, versus only 39

percent of the no-program group. Special education placement and the rate of in-grade repetition also were lower for those who participated. Enrollment in the CPC program has also had an effect on non-academic social outcomes. For example, we see that just 17 percent of enrollees experienced a juvenile arrest, versus one-quarter of the no-program group.

For the Perry Preschool Project, we see rates of special education placement that are half as high for the program group, in comparison to the no-program group. In addition, close to half of the Perry enrollees had standardized test achievement levels that were at the 10th percentile or higher, versus only 15 percent of the non-enrollees. And finally, a larger percentage of the program group graduated from high school on time, as well.

The slides you just viewed are brief examples of the individual school-age outcomes one might expect from access to a high-quality pre-K program. However, it's also important to talk about the outcomes children experience as adults. For the student that are in the back, what happens after you finish high school. When we examine economic variables for 27-year-olds who had previously participated in the Perry Preschool program, we see that their rates of earning at least $2,000 a month, owning their own home, or never having been on welfare as an adult are significantly better, in comparison to the no-program group. By age 40, we still see differences in terms of income, employment rates, and such characteristics as having a savings account.

When we talk about the potential outcomes from enrollment in pre-K programs, we tend to focus solely on, "OK, are children ready for kindergarten?" or how much better do they do when they hit a kindergarten classroom, in terms of knowing their letters and that kind of thing. But, it also is important to understand the economic returns to the larger community when schools have lower rates of special education placement and grade repetition, as well as higher high school graduation rates. And of course post-secondary employment and income rates also contribute to the larger community.

Each of these programs had different per-child costs. And the programs were admittedly——

Oh. I'm sorry. I'm missing the rest of my slide. There we go.

These programs were not cheap at all, as you can see, if you look at the per-child cost. But, perhaps the most compelling evidence for why high-quality pre-K is a wise investment is the benefit/cost ratio for each program. So, we see that, the Abecedarian program, realized a 2.5 to 1 rate of return. That means for every dollar that was spent initially, 2½ dollars came back to the community. The rate of return for the Chicago Child-Parent Center and High/Scope Perry programs were even higher. For every dollar invested in these programs, there was a $10 and $16 rate of return, respectively. I would like to ask all of you, Who has stuck a dollar in their bank recently and can earn a 16-percent rate of return?

I'm now wanting to share with you recent research on the effects of New Jersey's Abbott Pre-K program for children living in its most disadvantaged urban districts. In comparison to children who did not attend, second graders experienced higher language, literacy, and math gains. But, if you look at this slide, this is just

the retention in grade 2. And you'll see that, again, if children attended at age 3 and 4, versus none at all, their grade retention was cut in half.

So, one thing that I would really like to emphasize to you is that, within all four of these programs, while they were all different, they all had an emphasis on quality, in that they had teachers who were credentialed, they had a 4-year bachelor degree, as a minimum, teacher certification, small class sizes, lots of support for teachers, in terms of ongoing professional development and supervision. In that, for me, the takeaway message from this research, it is not so much that we want to expand access to pre-K to children for the sake of expanding access; we, at the same time, want to ensure that the programs young children have access to are of the highest quality, so that you will realize the returns that were demonstrated in these other research studies.

And I would conclude by saying that I realize that this type of program is not inexpensive, but that, to me, the cost of not providing a high-quality program is even more expensive than that.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DEBRA ACKERMAN

Good afternoon. My name is Debra Ackerman and I am the associate director for research at the National Institute for Early Education Research, which is part of Rutgers University. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

What I would like to share with you today is a brief overview of the compelling research base on the benefits of high-quality early learning programs. I will do this by highlighting the significant outcomes from research on four model early childhood education programs. In addition, outcomes are defined here as the effects on children and the economic returns to the larger communities they live in.

The evidence we have on the short- and long-term outcomes of high quality early childhood education come from a variety of rigorous research studies. However, the three most famous studies are those of the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry Preschool programs.

Three Benefit-Cost Analyses with Disadvantaged Children

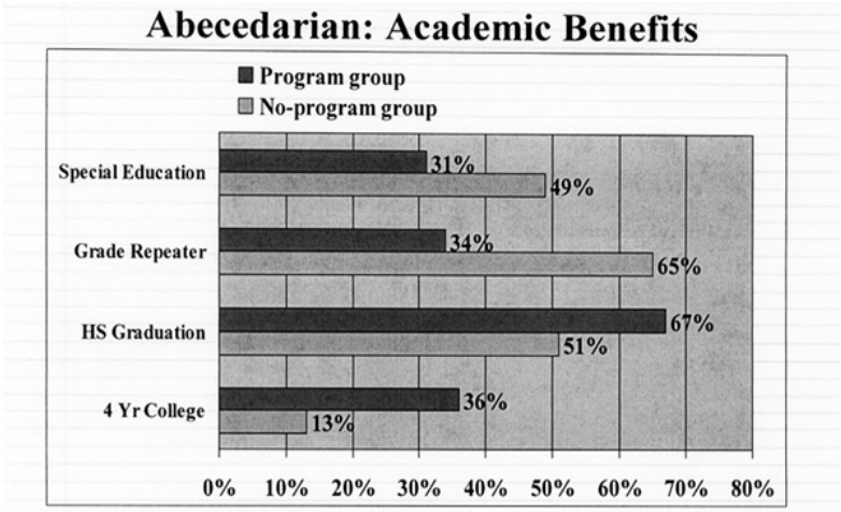
	Abecedarian	Chicago CPC	High/Scope Perry
Location	Chapel Hill, NC	Chicago, IL	Ypsilanti, MI
Number Served	111	1,539	123
Ages Served	6 weeks-Age 5	Ages 3-4	Ages 3-4
Program schedule	Full-day Full year	Half-day School year	Half-day School year
Teacher Qualifications	BA, MA, or demonstrated skills	Min. BA & EC certification	Min. BA & Elem/Spec Ed certif.
Max Class Size	7 toddlers 12 preschoolers	17	13

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications. *Economics of Education Review, 26*, 113-125. Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the Child-Parent Centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review, 26(1), 126-144.* Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The High Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40* (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Each of these programs served children who were considered to be at-risk for school failure. The Abecedarian and Perry Programs were very small in comparison

to the Child-Parent Center Program, which was offered by the Chicago Public School. The programs also differed in terms of the ages served and whether they had a half- or full-day program. However, all three programs used highly qualified teachers. In addition, because classrooms were staffed by a teacher and assistant, their staff-child ratios were 1 to 8.5 or better.

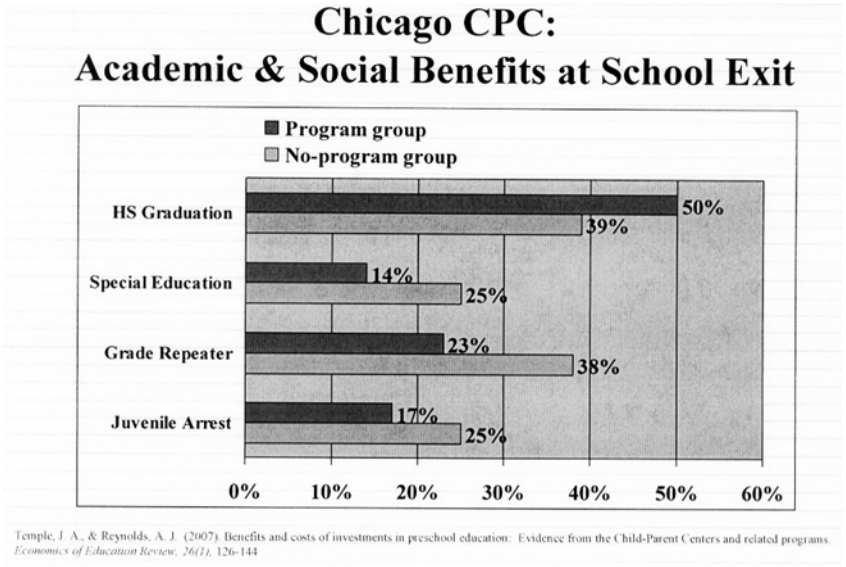
Despite the differences in schedule, each program has demonstrated remarkable academic benefits for enrollees in comparison to the outcomes for children who did not participate in the program. We begin with the small Abecedarian program. As can be seen from the slide, just one-third of enrollees were subsequently placed in a special education classroom, versus about half of the no-program group. In terms of grade repetition, again, about one third of enrollees repeated a grade in comparison to 65 percent of those who did not participate in the program.



Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications, *Economics of Education Review, 26,* 113-125; Campbell, F.A., Ramey, C.T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(1), 42-57

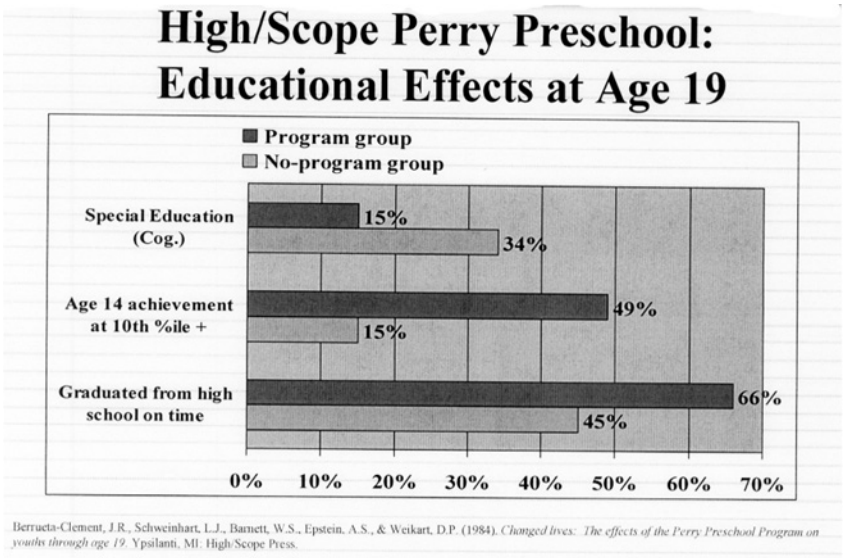
The difference in high school graduation rates was 67 versus 51 percent. Finally, while a full third of participants went on to a 4-year college, only 13 percent of the no-program group had a similar outcome.

We see similar results when comparing academic outcomes for those enrolled in the large-scale Chicago Child-Parent Center program. Half of the program enrollees graduated from high school, versus 39 percent of the no-program group.



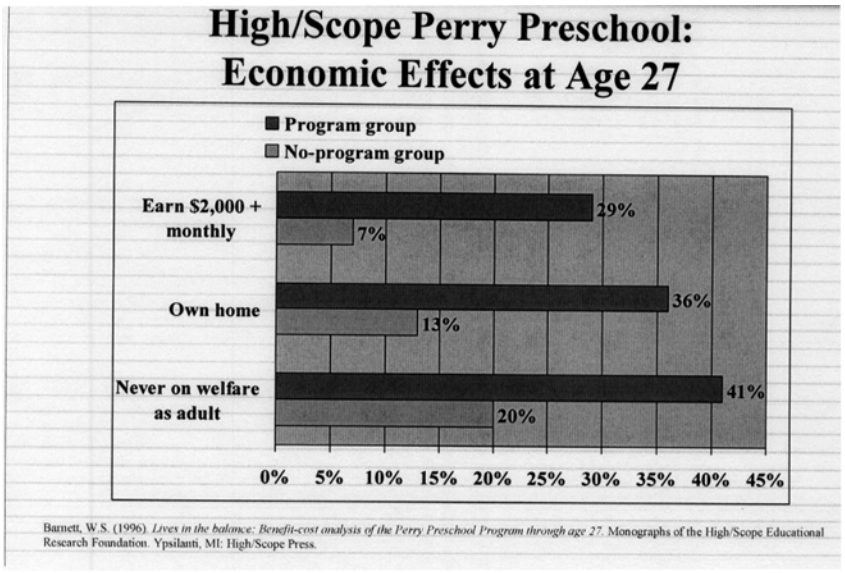
Special education placement and the rate of in-grade repetition also were lower for those who participated in the program. Participation in the CPC program also had an effect on non-academic social outcomes. For example, we see that just 17 percent of enrollees experienced a juvenile arrest, versus one-quarter of the no-program group.

For the Perry Preschool Project, when looking at outcomes at age 19, we see rates of special education placement that are half as high for the program group in comparison to the no-program group.



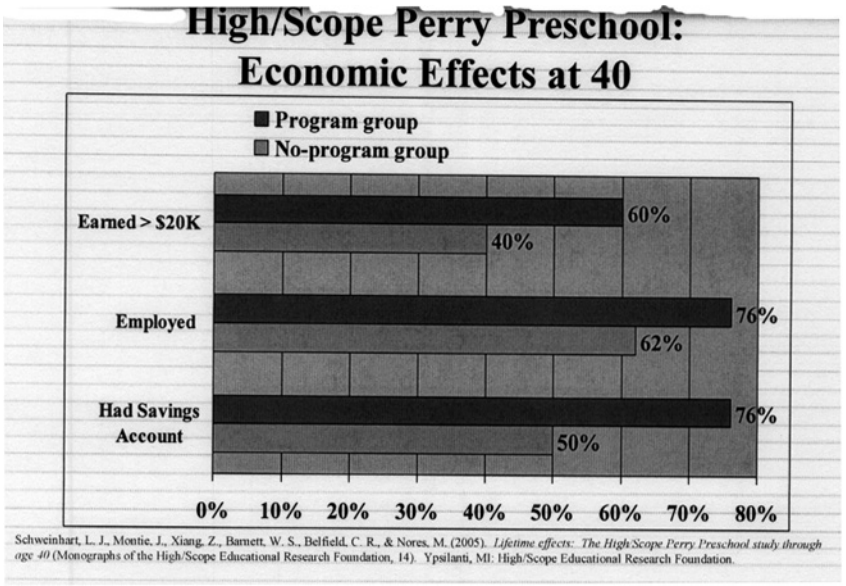
In addition, close to half of Perry enrollees had standardized test achievement levels that were at the 10th percentile or higher, versus only 15 percent of the non-enrollees. Finally, a larger percentage of the program group graduated from high school on time, as well.

The three slides I just showed are just brief examples of the individual school-age outcomes education stakeholders might expect for from access to high quality early childhood education programs. However, it's also important to talk about outcomes once children become adults.



For example, when examining several economic variables for 27-year olds who had previously participated in the Perry Pre-school program, we see that their rates of earning at least $2,000 per month, owning their own home, or never having been on welfare as an adult are significantly higher in comparison to the no-program group.

By age 40, we still see differences in terms of income, employment rates, and such characteristics as having a savings account.



When talking about the potential outcomes from enrollment in early childhood education programs, it also is important to understand the economic returns of the larger community when schools have lower rates of special education placement and grade repetition, as well as higher high school graduation rates. Higher post-secondary employment and income rates also contribute to the larger community.

Each of these three programs had different per-child costs and benefits. But, perhaps the most compelling evidence for why high quality early childhood programs are a wise investment is the benefit/cost ratio from these programs.

Economic Returns to EC Education for Disadvantaged Children

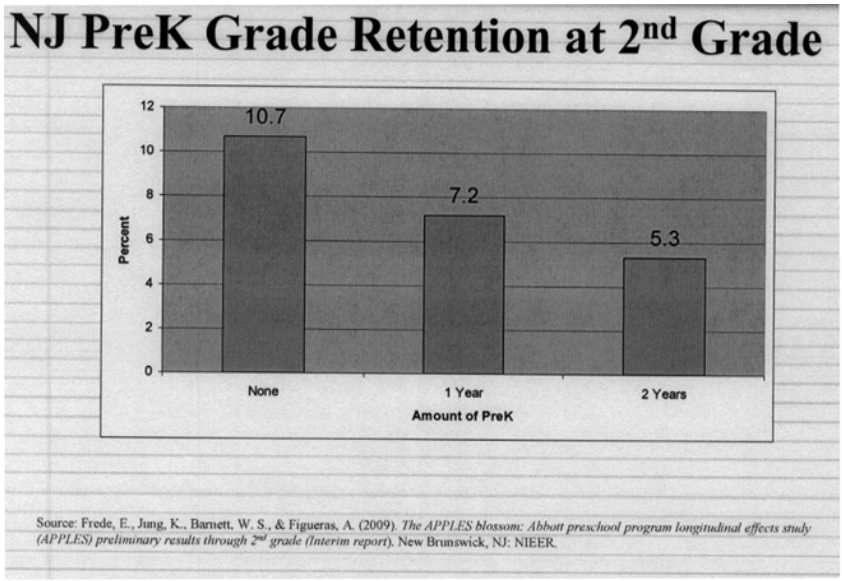
(In 2006 dollars, 3% discount rate)

	Per-child Cost	Benefits	B/C Ratio
▪ Abecedarian	$70,697	$176,284	2.5
▪ Chicago CPC	$ 8,224	$ 83,511	10
▪ High/Scope Perry	$17,599	$284,086	16

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications, *Economics of Education Review, 26,* 113-125; Belfield, C., Nores, M., Barnett, W.S., & Schweinhart, L.J. (2006). The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Human Resources, 41*(1), 162-190; Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the Child-Parent Centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review, 26(1), 126–144.*

The Abecedarian Program realized a 2.5 to 1 rate of return. The rate of return for the Chicago Child-Parent Center and High/Scope Perry programs are even higher. For every dollar invested in these programs, there was a $10 and $16 dollar return, respectively.

To share with you a more recent example, research on the effects of New Jersey's Abbott Pre-K Program through Grade 2 is showing similar promise for these types of academic outcomes.



In comparison to children who did not attend, we have found that enrollees experienced higher language, literacy, and math gains. By Grade 2, grade repetition is cut in half for children who attended at age 3 and 4 versus no enrollment at all.

We do not yet have the same type of longitudinal data for NJ's program to demonstrate the type of returns on the state's investment. However, what is important to note is that NJ's Abbott Pre-K shares many of the same high-quality program elements found in the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry programs.

PROGRAM QUALITY MATTERS

- Well-designed;
- Balanced practices & curriculum;
- Implemented as designed;
- Strong staff;
- Strong supervision and monitoring; and
- Use data to inform policy & practice.

More specifically, the teachers in the program all have a minimum of a BA and a specialized early child education certification. The program uses a full-day schedule and also provides before- and after-school care, which results in higher participation rates. Class size is capped at 15 students. Teachers need to use a research-based, intentional curriculum, and their practice is guided by State program standards and expectations for what children should learn. In addition, both children and teachers have access to a variety of key supports. Teachers, in particular, have access to ongoing training and supervision, as well.

In summary, rigorous research demonstrates the potential outcomes of access to high-quality early childhood education programs. These outcomes include higher learning gains for children and lower rates of grade repetition and special education placement. Children have a better shot at graduating from high school and going on to become productive members of society, as well.

All of these outcomes benefit the larger community and present the potential to realize an economic return that beats what I'm currently getting at my local bank. However, we must also keep in mind the importance of program quality. It is not enough to merely identify classroom space and staff and begin to offer a program that serves young children. Instead, early education stakeholders must ensure that programs offer children the experiences and support they need to realize the short- and long-term outcomes highlighted today.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senator CASEY. Thanks, Dr. Ackerman.

Joan Benso is next.

STATEMENT OF JOAN L. BENSO, PRESIDENT AND CEO, PENNSYLVANIA PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN, HARRISBURG, PA

Ms. BENSO. Thank you, Senator.

It's a pleasure to have the opportunity today to testify before this field hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

I'm Joan Benso. I'm the president of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. We're a statewide, independent, data-driven child advocacy organization, whose vision is to advance Pennsylvania's position as being one of the top 10 States in the Nation to be a child and to raise a child.

We, fundamentally, believe that what happens in early childhood, and the opportunities children have for enrichment and education in those years, will help us get there.

Candidly, I can't say any of it close to as well as Dr. Ackerman did. Her research findings, and her articulation of the importance of high-quality program characteristics to yield an astonishingly high return on the public's investment in pre-K, are simply the driving messages behind this.

But, let me share with you a little bit of Pennsylvania homegrown research on our own Pre-K Counts program or on our own investments in pre-K. A recent Pennsylvania study showed that school districts would recoup as much as 78 percent of their spending on pre-K—on reduced costs in special education in the immediate years to follow. You heard Dr. Yonson speak of the changes in the characteristics of her early elementary population. We can see a reduction in special education savings of at least 8 percent annually, in Pennsylvania, with a correlated investment in pre-K.

The study of our own Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program shows that 75 percent of the children—these are individual child assessments that have demonstrated this—end a year in Pre-K Counts fully ready for the rigors of kindergarten—75 percent of them. We've seen other data in Pennsylvania that shows very marked reduced placement in special education classes.

We know that pre-K programs, though, don't all produce the same outcomes. And Dr. Ackerman spoke, particularly at the end, about the core components of pre-K programs that will reduce the high quality of return on investment. There are programs that are driven by early learning standards that are connected to State's K to 12 academic standards.

So, as the committee is considering, in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, really thinking about systems of learning from pre-K through post-secondary completion, that's the model. But, these programs that work, that return that $16, are indeed programs that comply with what the research tells us it works. It's not "pre-K light," it's not some watered-down program, it's not someone else's rules. And I will tell you, much of that gets discussed, both in Washington and in Harrisburg.

They are programs that use a research-based curriculum that's aligned with the early learning standards. They are programs that used degreed and credentialed teachers, that have an opportunity for ongoing professional development, and that specialize in early

childhood education. They are programs that assure that group sizes and adult/child ratios are small. They are programs that insist upon a developmental approach to meeting the needs of children, and assuring that their physical health, hearing, vision is all well cared for and in place, and that engaged parents, and, as Senator Casey said in the beginning, and that proper nutrition is available for children. Those are the pre-K programs that are driven by our Pre-K Counts rules in Pennsylvania. Those are the programs that yield this rich return on investment. And those are the programs that, in the long run, save us, as taxpayers, money.

Now, as a taxpayer of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and of this country, I will tell you that all of us need to be more cognizant about investments of public dollars that yield these results.

Pennsylvania children enjoy the benefits of publicly funded pre-K, but the numbers of them that do are woefully small. We provide pre-K to children through Federal funding steams; Head Start, about 27,000 kids. Some children in Pennsylvania—indeed, under ESEA—districts use title I funding to provide pre-K to some small group of children. Our Pre-K Counts program serves about 12,000 kids. We have a State funding stream for Head Start that serves about another 4,500. Our Education Accountability Block Grant serves another 3,000. And it's true that the school district we're sitting in could use its basic education funding to provide pre-K, if it chose to. But, no one would give them any more for 7th-graders if they did, so let's not fool ourselves on that notion.

It's a lot of different pots, and it's a lot of different opportunity, but when you add it all up and you look at the 3- and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania, of which there are about 300,000, less than 18 percent of our 3- and 4-year-olds—less than one in five—benefit from the value of a high-quality publicly funded pre-K education that indeed readies them for school. And if you drive deeper into that data and look at the children who are most vulnerable, particularly due to poverty, if you look at the income guidelines for our Pre-K Counts program, which is families living under 300 percent of poverty, only 30 percent—less than one in three of them—have this opportunity.

We built a world-class early learning system in Pennsylvania over the last 7 years. And much of what we need now is a Federal/State partnership to expand its reach.

Senator Casey has been an enormous leader for children and healthcare in Washington, and we, at Pennsylvania Partnerships, have really valued our partnership with him on that.

But, we sit at a moment that is almost identical to where we stood in CHIP in 1997. Pennsylvania had its State law; we had 45,000 kids in service, in healthcare. There was no Federal support for health insurance for other than the poorest of poor families, and indeed the Federal Government took a step to pass the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and we got to clear our waiting list. Today we serve well over 200,000 children in that program. We have a universal health insurance program in Pennsylvania, but only because of that State/Federal partnership.

We would urge the committee to consider the model that was in play in SCHIP, which is very much like the parameters that were

in the Early Learning Challenge Fund, and very much like the parameters that are in Senator Casey's "Prepare All Kids" bill.

So, with a few more specifics, in wrapping up, we would urge the committee to create a dedicated pool of resources in ESEA reauthorization for pre-K, but only—and I underscore this—only if the base of financial support for ESEA is going to grow; otherwise, we're an organization that works on birth-to-adulthood issues and the whole education continuum. If we only say we're going to spend the same amount of money, but now we're going to take this pot over here for pre-K, we're going to take resources away from school districts and communities to use for disadvantaged 5th graders, and 7th graders, and 11th graders, and that simply doesn't make sense.

We would urge Congress to create a new and increased pot of money for early learning, and, if not, to at least create incentives in ESEA to spur States and LEA's investments in pre-Kindergarten; designate pre-Kindergarten as an option for turning around low-performing schools; go further than, potentially, the Administration's Blueprint for Reform has suggested; include 3- and 4-year-olds in the funding formulas to States for grants authorized on title I and title V; absolutely include the students in States' pre-K programs in their State's longitudinal data systems that are required; include pre-K as part of all early literacy initiatives; and give pre-K teachers the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities that are offered for other early childhood education teachers, particularly in K-through-3.

There's a big way to go about this, and more modest way to go about it. We urge Congress to just go about it.

Thank you, Senator.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Benso follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOAN BENSO

Good afternoon Senator Casey. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today before this field hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee: *Partnering to Prepare-Expanding Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education*.

I am Joan Benso, President & CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC). PPC is a statewide, independent, non-partisan, data-driven child advocacy organization. We seek to improve the health, education and well-being of the Commonwealth's children. Our vision is that by 2014, PPC will have helped Pennsylvania move into position as one of the top 10 States in the Nation to be a child and to raise a child. Providing children access to high-quality pre-K and assuring that every Pennsylvania child benefits from a K–12 education that prepares them for college and careers are core strategies as we strive to achieve our vision for the Commonwealth.

What happens in early childhood can influence a lifetime of learning and earnings for every child. Research supports high-quality pre-K as an effective strategy to improve education achievement. Studies show that children who attend high-quality pre-K programs enter kindergarten with better language, reading, math and social skills.[1] They have fewer grade retentions, less remediation, higher standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates.[2]

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[1] Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R. Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S.L., Yazejian, N., Byler, P., Rustici, J., & Zelazo, J (2000). The children of the cost, quality and outcomes study go to school: Technical report. Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.

[2] National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000) From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children,

Many studies show a positive return for children, schools and communities by investing in high quality pre-K. Today you will hear from a researcher from the National Institute on Early Education Research who will provide you with much great insight into the literature than I can. But, let me share a little bit of home-grown Pennsylvania evidence that supports investments in high quality pre-K. A recent study in Pennsylvania showed school districts could recoup as much as 78 percent of pre-K spending in education savings and special education costs could be reduced statewide by at least 8 percent annually.[3] A review of the PA Pre-K Counts program shows it is achieving great results; 75 percent of the children who entered at risk of education failure completed the most recent school year with age-appropriate proficiency in literacy, numeracy and social skills and headed off to kindergarten ready to learn.[4]

But we know that all pre-K programs don't produce the same outcomes. Quality matters. It is high-quality that produces the positive academic results for children and the tremendous return on investments. High-quality in pre-K programs are driven by early learning standards that are part of a p–16 academic standards continuum. They are programs that use a research-based curriculum, employee degreed teachers who engage in continued professional development and specialize in early learning, assure that group size and adult-child ratios remain low, provide for health, vision and hearing screenings as well as family support services to name a few. Pre-K programs that don't conform to the research based program parameters are a poor use of the taxpayers' money.

Pennsylvania children enjoy the benefits of publicly funded pre-K through a number of programs and funding streams. They have access to pre-K through Federal programs including Head Start, which provides pre-K to more than 27,000 low-income children[5] and title I. Until a few short years ago, Pennsylvania held the distinction of being one of a handful of States that did not support high-quality pre-K with State funds. In recent years, the Commonwealth has established several funding streams for pre-K including:

- Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts—delivers high-quality pre-K to children at risk of education failure through a mixed delivery system of school districts, Head Start providers, certain licensed child care providers, and private academic nursery schools. Under the program, 115 grantees served 11,841 children in fiscal year 2008–9.[6]
- Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program—expands Head Start services to more children in the Commonwealth. The State funds are being used to provide Head Start services to nearly 4,500 children (in addition to the 27,000 that are supported only by Federal funds).[7]
- Education Accountability Block Grant—enables school districts to invest in education programs that are proven to help children's academic achievement. Establishing, maintaining or expanding a quality pre-Kindergarten program aligned with the State's current academic standards is an allowable use of grant funds. Districts are using a portion of the block grant to provide pre-K to 3,100 children.[8]
- Basic Education Funding Formula—while very few did, school districts have been allowed to use basic education funding for pre-K. Our new school funding formula requires school districts that receive increases greater than an inflation index to invest the funds greater than the index in student achievement strategies. Pre-K is one of the allowable student achievement strategies.

I am proud to have supported the creation of these Pennsylvania programs. Unfortunately, not all children who could benefit from these programs have access to them. There are about 295,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania. Less than 18

Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

[3] Pennsylvania Build Initiative. (2006). Invest now or pay more later: Early childhood education promises savings to Pennsylvania school districts.

[4] Office of Child Development and Early Learning. (2009). Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts: End of year report 2008–9. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare.

[5] Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009–10 enrollment.

[6] Office of Child Development and Early Learning. (2009). Program Reach and Risk Assessment. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare.

[7] Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009–10 enrollment.

[8] Office of Child Development and Early Learning. (2009). Program Reach and Risk Assessment. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare.

percent of these children have access to high-quality public funded pre-K.[9] If we dig a little deeper into the data, we see that more than 57 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds live in families with incomes below 300 percent of the Federal poverty level. But only 30 percent of children from these families have access to high-quality public funded pre-K.[10]

We have a good system here in Pennsylvania that only reaches some of our children who are at risk of education failure with high-quality public funded pre-K. More can and must be done to reach more of our youngest learners in order to improve young learners' school readiness and long-term academic and life outcomes.

The status of publicly funded high-quality pre-K in Pennsylvania bears a striking resemblance to where we stood with CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) in 1997. Then, we had a strong program that provided access to health insurance to a small percentage of Pennsylvania's uninsured children. As you well know, Senator Casey, it was one of a few State programs in existence at that time. State resources only took the program so far; enrollment was a little more than 45,000 and there was a very long waiting list.

The Federal Government took a bold step to help children's access to health care in 1997 and enacted a Federal counterpart to Pennsylvania's CHIP that was based on our successful, but limited program. The State-Federal partnership provided much-needed financing in Federal matching funds as well as rigorous program requirements. Pennsylvania was immediately able to clear our CHIP waiting list and continue to serve every eligible child applying for coverage. The elimination of a waiting list and the comfort that low-income families enjoyed—knowing they could turn to CHIP to assure their children would have insurance coverage—gave hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania parents' peace of mind. In 2006, Pennsylvania took the monumental step to make insurance coverage available to all children in the Commonwealth whose families do not have access to or cannot afford health insurance. This could have never happened without a strong State-Federal financing partnership.

Pennsylvania needs a strong partnership with the Federal Government to expand access to high-quality pre-K to more children, and eventually to reach all children. Senator Casey, your Prepare All Kids legislation (S. 839) provides a solid foundation for such a partnership. The legislation provides matching Federal resources for State pre-K programs. It ensures that the public funded pre-K programs would be of high quality and utilize a research-based curriculum that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Prepare All Kids would also establish strong teacher credential requirements as well as provide for accountability for State programs. Importantly, the program does not seek to divert funds from other education programs.

The Federal Early Learning Challenge Fund proposal could also help improve access to high-quality pre-K. The proposal would create a framework for States to guide them in establishing and growing a comprehensive system of high-quality early learning environments. It would set a clear and important goal of increasing the number of disadvantaged children in high quality programs. We were disappointed that the Fund provisions were not included in the final version of the reconciliation bill that accompanied health care reform, but we were greatly encouraged by your support for it.

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) presents a unique and timely opportunity to establish a strong State-Federal partnership to expand access to high-quality pre-K in Pennsylvania and in States nationwide. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children believes that government has a responsibility for educational opportunities for children and young adults from birth to age 25 or through completion of a post-secondary education program that prepares a young adult for an individual and family sustaining wage job.

I respectfully urge this committee to make pre-K a part of the education continuum in ESEA and include provisions in ESEA to ensure that public-funded pre-K is of high quality. But, let me offer a serious caution. While inclusion of pre-K is a laudable goal, it cannot happen without significantly expanding Federal financial support for the base of ESEA first, and then augmenting that enhanced based with additional resources to fund pre-K. The goal of ESEA in the past—to assure that every American child achieves to world class academic standards—has been on target. But the problem has been that it has been a hollow promise—a mandate without the resources to implement our common vision that every child can and should achieve. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children works on the full education

[9] (2009). School readiness in Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

[10] Ibid.

continuum and we will not support ESEA reauthorization that is driven by a "rob Peter to pay Paul" mentality. If resources can be made available, adding an explicit initiative to promote pre-K will help provide a solid foundation in ESEA which can multiply the impact of other reforms in the act. If additional resources are not found, the very least that should occur during reauthorization is more guidance and incentives to encourage States and local education agencies to expand pre-K.

The Prepare All Kids Act and provisions similar to the Early Learning Challenge Fund would be good additions to ESEA with a new pot of funding. Some additional ideas are present in The U.S. Department of Education's Blueprint for Reform for the reauthorization of ESEA. We urge the committee, at the very least, to consider pre-K as you develop the legislation in the following areas:

- Designate high-quality pre-kindergarten as an option for turning around low-performing schools.
- Include children ages 3 and 4 in the ESEA funding formulas including grants authorized in titles I and V.
- Include students enrolled in publicly funded pre-K in State longitudinal data system.
- Include pre-K as part of literacy initiatives.
- Include pre-K teachers in professional development opportunities.

These are but a few recommendations for promoting high-quality pre-K and enhancing access to pre-K through ESEA. Reauthorization of the Act is a tremendous opportunity to create a strong State-Federal partnership on pre-K and create a continuum of learning from early childhood to post-secondary completion.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and thank you for everything you do for Pennsylvania's children.

Senator CASEY. Joan, thank you very much.

Todd Klunk.

STATEMENT OF TODD KLUNK, ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY, OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING, PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC WELFARE AND EDUCATION, HARRISBURG, PA

Mr. KLUNK. Thank you, Senator.

I am Todd Klunk. I represent the Office of Child Development; I'm the acting deputy secretary. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning is an office with roots in both the Education Department as well as the Department of Public Welfare.

We did hear from the witnesses today why an investment in early education is important. I'm not going to go into depth or rehash that, but I do want to say that, as we urge Congress to look at the facts, we do have two interesting groups that are supporting the investment into early childhood, that I want to share with you.

In Pennsylvania, we commissioned—it's called the Early Learning Investment Commission. It's a group of 26 business leaders—CEOs and business leaders of Pennsylvania companies. They are supporting our investment, and we're utilizing them to help us make the case. I was just co-speaking with one of our commission members who said we have three options when we talk about staffing. We can either export the job, we can import the talent, or we can develop that talent right here in Pennsylvania. And so, that's the vision of the Investment Commission—to develop that talent here in Pennsylvania.

As well as, recently, the Central Bank, or the Federal Reserve, had a lot of positive things to say about early childhood. And I have that on the record. The Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis actually is doing a lot of national discussion about the importance of investing in early childhood, and those payoffs.

So, given the compelling research, the return on investment, and school readiness aspects of early education, does beg the question, "Why aren't we reaching all children who are either at risk or potentially all children in the Commonwealth?" And that is one of capacity. All right?

I want to talk, briefly, two points on capacity, where we are now, and a call to action for Congress. Some of these stats are similar to Joan's, so I'm not going to dwell too much on the stats.

But, again, Pennsylvania has seen remarkable growth in the last 7 years. We went from only one of nine States in the country not to have a publicly-funded pre-K program, to national leader. We have increased access to 3- and 4-year-olds. We are now serving 35,000 more 3- and 4-year-olds over the last 7 years, with State funding streams, such as the Accountability Block Grant, Pre-K Counts, the Head Start State supplemental, as well as increases in the basic education funding.

As a result of these efforts, we have doubled the participation and the percentage of Keystone STARS, or providers that participate in Keystone STARS. In 2002–3, we were at 32 percent, and today we're well over 75 percent. We've also doubled the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds participating in high-quality early education programs. And to date, about 36 percent of our young children participate in publicly funded quality education programs.

That's the good news. However, as everybody knows, States are struggling with State revenue. We proposed a budget for 2010–11 that has—even with our strong commitment to early education, two of our early childhood programs are receiving a slight reduction in the proposed budget. In addition, just this week, Pennsylvania announced a $720-million projected deficit for this fiscal year. These reductions obviously are coming at a bad time for families who are impacted by the recession. Those families that receive less wages or less hours per week really don't have the financial means to send their children to high-quality pre-K programs.

I will point out that the State, too, is faced with limited resources, as well. At the beginning of this preschool—or Pre-K Counts year, 7,800 children applied, and were determined eligible, for the program that did not receive services—7,800. And that's a conservative estimate, because, as we all know, Pre-K Counts is only in pockets around the Commonwealth. We're not everywhere in the Commonwealth. So, when you consider all the eligibles, we would be a lot higher than 7,800 children. As well as the low-income childcare waiting list—about 4,000 children to date, as of today, are on that low income. That's another means of getting children into quality pre-K opportunities.

So, we do—we also, here at the Commonwealth, agree that there needs to be a Federal funding source. Such a dedicated funding source for early childhood would show a commitment by the feds to the importance of early childhood, and it would lessen the demand on State revenues. Whether it's title I or the Challenge Grants or Prepare All Kids legislation or the Elementary or Secondary Education Act, as we talk about serious education reform and improving student achievement, we do make a case that early childhood education answers that call.

I looked over the President's Blueprint for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, talked about preparing kids for college and career readiness. And as we talked about earlier today, early childhood has compelling research that we do prepare. Our kids that attend quality early learning programs are more likely to graduate and attend college. His other two points were to focus on English language learners as well as children with disabilities. And, again, we have great research, from our first 2 years in Pre-K Counts, where we actually are closing the gap on English language learners.

So, just to quickly end here, we would urge Congress, again, that the funding—a dedicated early childhood funding stream should be flexible. We believe it should be granted to States so that they can work with their local school district and their community partners to really move their childhood continuum to the next level. And Pennsylvania's called upon, in a lot of different ways, to share our lessons learned and how we developed our system with other States. So, States are at different points in their continuum, and the development of that continuum, so if we had a flexible funding stream, that would help States make those independent decisions on what's next; what they need to take their system to the next level.

I'll just end on this. You know, as we think about reauthorization or a Federal funding stream—staggering fact here, that 85 percent of the foundation for communications, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork is developed by age 5. So, many times by kindergarten, it's too late. And with just this fact alone, a Federal funding stream could be a real change vehicle to improve the lives of children and prepare them for school and life success.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Klunk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TODD KLUNK

Good morning. I am Todd Klunk, Acting Deputy Secretary for the Office of Child Development and Early Learning of the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare, and co-chair of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Council.

We have heard (or will hear) from many different speakers today why an investment in early childhood education is important. To highlight a few key points:

- There is a real return on investment—up to a $16 return on every dollar invested in early education.
- Early education helps our economic growth tomorrow by developing productive citizens and a competitive workforce.
- Early education is vital to our communities' health and infrastructure.
- Investing in early education creates more economic stimulus than any other sector according to a recent study at Cornell University.

To see a real return on investment in early education, a commitment at the Federal, State and local levels are essential.

The positive outcomes of investing in early education are supported by decades of research and are being endorsed by business leaders and economists. In Pennsylvania, the Early Learning Investment Commission is composed of 26 business leaders who were appointed by Governor Rendell from across the commonwealth. The purpose of the Commission is to secure public investment in early learning programs that are educationally, economically and scientifically sound by means of increasing business, civic and public awareness of the importance of early childhood education. The support of our business leaders is flourishing as we now have six regional business coalitions working in different parts of the States.

Additionally the central bank of the United States had this to say about early childhood education:

> "Although education and the acquisition of skills is a lifelong process, starting early in life is crucial. Recent research—some sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in collaboration with the University of Minnesota—has documented the high returns that early childhood programs can pay in terms of subsequent educational attainment and in lower rates of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency."

(Remarks by Federal Reserve Board Chairman Ben S. Bernanke, Before the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, February 6, 2007)

With this high rate of return, why are not all at-risk children being served and efforts being made to serve all children in high quality early learning programs?

Pennsylvania's early learning programs have seen remarkable growth, but we still cannot reach all children who can benefit. Since 2003, Pennsylvania has moved from one of nine States to offer no publicly funded pre-kindergarten to one of the Nation's leaders in early education. We have made good progress over the last 7 years adding funding to serve 3- and 4-year-olds through the Accountability Block Grant, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental and increases to basic education subsidies. Through these efforts we are serving an additional 35,000 children.

In addition, Pennsylvania is one of the first States to:

- Establish learning standards for early childhood from birth through third grade and commission an independent study to ensure alignment of all standards;
- Establish a State-funded quality pre-kindergarten system that includes both school-based and community-based early education programs (Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts);
- Create a cohesive Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) that brings together the resources and expertise for early education, spanning across State agencies; and
- Develop a common set of child outcomes assessments for all State-funded early learning programs and a system to report outcomes (Early Learning Network).

As a result of these efforts to build a quality early education continuum:

- the percentage of child care centers participating in Keystone STARS has more than doubled (from 32 percent in 2002–3 to 75 percent in 2008–9);
- the percentage of school districts offering pre-kindergarten programs has quadrupled (from 6 percent in 2003–4 to 26 percent in 2008–9); and
- the percentage of Pennsylvania's 3- and 4-year olds participating in high quality early education programs has doubled (from 18 percent in 2002–3 to 35 percent in 2008–9).

Pennsylvania has increased its commitment to early education for several years so that approximately 36 percent of our young children participate in publicly funded quality early education programs.

However, Pennsylvania has been struggling with State revenues, as are all States. Even with our high commitment to early education, the fiscal year 2010–11 State budget calls for cuts to some early education services to children because State funds are simply not available. Recently, Pennsylvania announced an estimated $720 million State deficit for the current fiscal year. If revenue does not begin to balance with our proposed budgets, additional reductions are imminent.

These reductions to early childhood programs are coming at a time when families impacted by the economic recession do not have sufficient funds to place their children in a quality pre-kindergarten program and State programs are faced with waiting lists. At the beginning of this school year, there were 7,800 eligible children who applied for PA Pre-K Counts who could not be enrolled because of a lack of resources. This is twice the number of children on waiting lists at the start of the 2008–9 school year. Considering that PA Pre-K Counts classrooms are targeted to serve areas with the highest percent of children in low-income families, there are many other areas with eligible low-income children that are not included in the wait list count.

New Federal funding is needed to help close the national gap between children who are at-risk of school failure and not in quality early learning programs. Such an effort would show a serious commitment by the Federal Government to early childhood education and a better balance of public investment—lessening the demand on State revenues.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides an opportunity for an appropriate public funding base for early education. As the Nation works to reform education to improve student achievement so that all students are college- and career-ready, now is the time. Early education, supported by research, will meet many of the President's Blueprint Goals for the ESEA. We know that children who participate in quality early education programs are more likely to do well in school and graduate high school and attend college. Quality early education is the most

effective and cost-efficient way to prepare all children for school—especially those at risk of school failure. For children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts last year, for example, progress was made in closing achievement gaps for English Language Learners and children with developmental delays or disabilities. For instance, Spanish-speaking children were three times more likely than English-speaking children to begin the year without age-expected language and literacy skills. By the end of the year, Spanish-speaking children participating in Pre-K Counts had closed the gap—ending the year with less than 2 percent of children still without age-expected skills. It is more costly and less effective to wait and try to remediate problems later.

The ESEA could afford States an opportunity to strategically restructure their entire birth to five continuum of services. The ESEA should provide a dedicated early childhood education funding stream directly to States with flexibility to allow all States an opportunity for systemic changes across the birth—five continuum. By providing a dedicated early education funding stream to the States—not directly to the local education agencies—States could work with their State advisory committees and other early education stakeholders to determine how best to move their early childhood continuum to the next level. The ESEA could allow States to implement or expand pre-kindergarten opportunities, continuous quality improvement systems, infant and toddler initiatives, home visiting models, and/or build better infrastructures such as information technology solutions to improve accountability, monitoring and instruction.

Serious education reform must include early education. As the Nation begins reauthorization, we need to remember the research studies that document more than 85 percent of the foundation for communications, critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork is developed by age 5. With just this fact alone, the ESEA could be a change vehicle that improves the lives of young children across the Nation and prepares them for school and life success.

I thank you for this opportunity.

APPENDIX 1.—PA OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT & EARLY LEARNING SELECTED PROGRAMS

Child Care Certification—certification and inspection of approximately 9,000 regulated child care programs serving 350,000 children.

Child Care Works—tuition assistance for 130,000 children (monthly average) of low-income working families.

Children's Trust Fund—initiatives to prevent child abuse as determined by the Trust Fund board, a mixed group of legislators and gubernatorial appointees, and staffed by OCDEL.

Community Engagement—local groups to work on community education on early childhood education and to focus on the transition between community early childhood education programs and school district K–12 programs.

Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative—early childhood mental health specialists who consult with Keystone STARS programs about program and child needs and interventions when behavioral issues with children arise.

Early Learning Network—To use technology to collect indicators of child outcomes so that the analysis of this information can be used to better manage State investments for early learning programs. Pennsylvania's goal is to use the information to manage its finances more effectively by targeting resources to those programs and services that bring about good progress while considering individual circumstances and demographics that also may affect results. This information will also be available to local teachers and administrators and provide them with real time data so that they may continuously improve their performance to better meet the needs of the children they serve. The objectives are:

1. To know if Pennsylvania's early education programs are making a difference,
2. To understand how financial resource levels relate to child outcomes,
3. To meet State and Federal reporting requirements related to child progress,
4. To compare programs serving similar types of children on ability to enhance child progress,
5. To tailor professional development and technical assistance to address most pressing early learning needs, and
6. To understand how program factors work together to impact children.

Full Day Kindergarten (through Accountability Block Grant)—dedicated resources for school districts to implement research-based interventions that improve student performance, with nearly ⅔ of the money invested in Full-Day Kindergarten now serving 65 percent of PA children and with OCDEL providing on-site observations and professional development for teachers and administrators.

Early Intervention Birth to Five—Infant/Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention (under IDEA) for approximately 80,000 children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Early Intervention Technical Assistance—professional development and technical assistance for sound implementation of Early Intervention services, including new communications certification.

Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Program—State resources to enroll over 4,000 more children in Head Start.

Keystone Babies—Keystone Babies is a voluntary, center-based program offered to Pennsylvania Keystone STAR 3 or 4 programs applying for a classroom of infants and toddlers who are enrolled in the Child Care Works program. Pilot to serve approximately 200 children in 2010–11.

Keystone STARS—a quality rating and improvement system serving over 170,000 children enrolled in thousands of child care programs with a combination of standards, financial and professional supports, and third party monitoring on accountability.

Nurse Family Partnership—evidence-based nurse based home visiting model for very high risk first-time mothers and their young children.

Parent Child Home Literacy Program—evidence-based play and literacy based home visiting program for at-risk young children with a focus on toddlers.

PA Early Learning Keys to Quality-regionalized approach to improved professional development of early education teachers, aides and administrators, offering a career lattice with resources to obtain early childhood degrees and credentials, and technical assistance to support program quality improvement. Statewide, support for the T.E.A.C.H. educational scholarship program, a voucher program for practitioners in Keystone STARS and PA Pre-K Counts earning college credits, an articulation project with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education to bring 2- and 4-year colleges together to assure program to program articulation and transfer in early childhood education; an oversight system for certifying instructors and technical assistance staff to deliver professional development; support for PA certification programs in early childhood, including director's credential and school-age credential. Additional statewide and regional supports are also in place, all linked to the programs engaged in quality through STARS, EI, Pre-K Counts, etc.

PA Pre-K Counts-preschool program of 2.5 or 5 hours a day, 180 days a year, for at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds, with high standards, offered by a diverse array of school districts, Keystone STARS, Head Start, and licensed nursery school programs.

PA's Promise for Children—public information resources to inform and educate parents, business leaders and others in the general community about early childhood education.

Public-Private Partnerships—These are partnerships with foundations and the research community and include Pennsylvania's participation in the national BUILD initiative, a financial investment by foundations in the Early Learning Network, the Early Learning Investment Commission, community engagement, and continued development of the capacity of higher education to assist community-based teachers earn early childhood teacher certification by responding to their unique needs.

Appendix 2.—Children Served Over Time

Program	FY 2002–3	FY 2009–10[1]	FY 2010–11[1]
Class Size Reduction:			
K–3rd Grade	Did not exist	16,705[2]	16,705[2]
Child Care Works:			
TANF	33,939	34,743	37,012
Former TANF:	20.000	33,223	32,746
Low income	45,908	59,825	64,614
Total (monthly average)	99,847	127,791	134,372
Early Intervention:			
Birth to 3 program	22,020	33,212	34,384
3 to 5 program	33,726	46,052	47,312
Full Day Kindergarten:	42,015	80,454	80,454
Head Start:			
Total Head Start in PA	30,986	35,311[2]	35,311[2]
Supplemental Assistance Program	Did not exist	5,743[2]	5,626[1]
Keystone STARS:			
Estimated children in Keystone STARS	45,745	177,530	177,530
Number of providers in Keystone Stars	898	4,464	4,464

Appendix 2.—Children Served Over Time—Continued

Program	FY 2002–3	FY 2009–10[1]	FY 2010–11[1]
Nurse-Family Partnership	3,092	4,247	4,247[2]
Pre-K:			
School-based Pre-K and K–4	2,682	9,256	14,675
PA Pre-K Counts	Did not exist	11,800	11,732[1]

[1] Fiscal Year-End Goal or Projection.
[2] Projection based on previous FY program.

APPENDIX 3.—PENNSYLVANIA 2008–9 REACH AND RISK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

One of the most important ways to help children reach their potential and succeed is through quality early education. Quality early education opportunities are especially important for children affected by conditions that make them at risk to fail in school. When children affected by risk factors such as living in low-income families or low education level of the mother have access to quality early education before age 5, these children can often make up for setbacks in their development, enabling them to enter kindergarten on par with their peers.

Children who are encouraged and supported through quality early childhood education demonstrate significant progress in acquiring early learning skills and may save schools money for special education and remediation costs. These children are more likely to graduate from high school, to attend college or quality job training programs, and be valuable members of the workforce. The benefits of quality early education to children and families translate into a more competitive workforce and greater tax base, while reducing public expenses in special education costs, public assistance, crime control and lost taxes.

It is in Pennsylvania's best interest to invest in quality early education because it will provide our communities with benefits for years to come, but it is important that these investments are strategically made to provide the greatest return possible for the commonwealth with our limited resources.

In order to support sound programmatic and investment decisions regarding the distribution of early education services, the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) annually compiles the Program Reach and Risk Report. This report provides county—as well as city—specific information on the level of risk for school failure for children (based on seven risk factors) and the availability, or reach, of most OCDEL programs to children in each county and in the 27 largest cities in Pennsylvania. This is the third year of the report.

To enhance the Reach and Risk report, OCDEL includes a breakdown of reach of programs by infant/toddlers (birth—2 years); preschool (ages three and four; and all children under age five served.

OCDEL's Program Reach and Risk Assessment for fiscal year 2008–9 shows that Pennsylvania continues to make progress serving young children, but still experiences gaps in serving children who could benefit the most from a quality early education experience, especially serving infants and toddlers.

RISK

• **Children are at risk of school failure throughout the commonwealth.** Of the 67 counties, children in 51 (76 percent) counties are at moderate-high or high risk of school failure; of the 27 largest cities, children in 24 (89 percent) are at moderate-high or high risk of school failure. Every community has children affected by risk factors for school failure. For example, approximately one-third of children in Pennsylvania (37 percent) under age 5 are living in low-income families; each county has at least 15 percent of its children under age five living in low-income families. In 20 of our 27 largest cities, more than half of the children under age 5 live in low-income families.

REACH

• **Approximately one-third (36 percent) of children under age five participate in State and/or federally funded quality early childhood education programs.** In the commonwealth's 27 largest cities, more than half (56 percent) of children under age 5 participate in State and/or federally funded quality early childhood programs. Quality programs are defined as: Nurse-Family Partnership, Parent

* *http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=EarlyLearning*__Reach.

Child Home Program, Head Start State and Federal, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, PA Pact for Pre-K, School-Based Pre-K, Early Intervention, and Keystone STARS.

• **Reach by county is greatest for Keystone STARS (15 percent), Early Intervention (11 percent) and Head Start (5 percent).** These programs are the only direct impact programs for children under the age of 5 to reach children in all 67 counties.

• **Reach is greatest across the commonwealth for Keystone STARS.** Of all the State investments, most children were reached through the Keystone STARS program, which provides service to 15 percent of children from birth to age 5. Three percent of children under age 5 in Pennsylvania were served in STAR 3 and 4 programs. As of May 2009, there were 4,282 child care providers within the Keystone STARS system, covering all counties and reaching an estimated 107,546 children under age 5.

• **Less than one-fifth (19 percent) of Pennsylvania's infants and toddlers participate in quality early education programs.** Among children under age three statewide, approximately 10 percent are served by Keystone STARS, 0.5 percent are served by Early Head Start, and 7 percent are served by Early Intervention.

• **Approximately half (55 percent) of Pennsylvania's preschoolers (3- and 4-year-olds) are served in State and/or federally funded quality early childhood programs.** Twenty-two percent of 3- and 4-year-olds are served by Keystone STARS, 11 percent are served by State and Federal Head Start, and 10 percent are served by Early Intervention.

INVESTMENT IN QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

• **Pennsylvania's investment per child served under the age of 5 is $3,033 annually.** Children receiving service in these State and federally funded early childhood programs are funded at the rate of approximately $3,033 per child served, an amount which is significantly less than the cost of providing a quality early education experience that produces positive outcomes for children, families and communities. In general, the national cost for a 5-hour day at 180 days a year for a pre-kindergarten program is $8,700 per child. This represents a gap in our public investment to achieve the most positive results for children.

The quality of a child's early education affects their learning for life. By understanding the needs of our young children across the commonwealth and the reach of our early childhood programs, Pennsylvania can make smarter investments in a brighter future.

APPENDIX 4.—HIGHLIGHTS

1. 2008–9 EXCERPT FROM OCDEL ANNUAL REPORT

In 2008–9 OCDEL focused on creating more quality early learning opportunities for children, assuring strong implementation and coordination among programs, building accountability into the system, and beginning development of a system to document positive outcomes for children. Here are some highlights from the year:

Strive for Higher Quality and Reach all Children and Families That can Benefit

• Pennsylvania revised its child care regulations for the first time in 16 years.

• OCDEL completed a nine-part series of training videos on the Learning Standards for Early Childhood to help early learning directors, teachers and staff make the most of this resource. New parent companion guides to the learning standards were also released, including *Learning Is Everywhere*, a birth–5 activity guide that provides activities for families to do together in various learning locations and *Kindergarten, Here I Am*, a 15-month activity guide that supports skill-building activities before, during and after kindergarten.

• OCDEL published its second Program Reach and Risk Assessment Report, including information on risk and reach for each county and Pennsylvania's 27 largest cities.

• OCDEL published its English Language Learner Toolkit to help early education providers increase their cultural competence and provide higher quality experiences to English Language Learners and their families.

• OCDEL's Braiding Preschool Funding Task Force provided tools and professional development to early education programs for making most efficient use of the various State and Federal funding streams available for pre-kindergarten.

• OCDEL and Early Intervention Technical Assistance piloted a new professional development series that results in a credential in Early Intervention Language Special Instruction.

• In 2008, Pennsylvania was one of seven States invited to develop a plan to integrate the Strengthening Families approach into its programs.

Result

• Overall, the alignment study of Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood found the standards and assessments are strong and show good alignment across grade levels.

• Nearly one-third (32 percent) of Keystone STARS programs moved up at least one STAR level in 2008–9. There was a 30 percent increase in the number of STAR 3 and 4 programs between 2007–8 and 2008–9.

• Environment Rating Scale scores have increased among Keystone STARS programs for 2008–9. The overall average score for STAR 3 sites was 5.23 in 2008–9, which is an increase from 2007–8 when the average score was 5.06. STAR 4 sites scored an overall average of 5.48 in 2008–9, which is an increase from 2007–8 when the average score was 5.31.

• More families accessing Child Care Works subsidy are using regulated care than ever before, with 70 percent of TANF children receiving child care assistance are using regulated child care in 2008–9, a 38 percent increase since Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agencies began providing child care services to TANF families in 2006–7.

• Nearly all (95 percent) children in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms were affected by at least one risk factor for academic failure, such as living in low-income families, learning English as a second language, or having disabilities or developmental delays. Most (77 percent) were affected by two or more risk factors, making them more likely to struggle in school.

• 60 percent more bachelor's degree scholarships were awarded through T.E.A.C.H. than in 2007–8.

• There was a 76 percent increase in the number of Director's Credentials awarded between 2007–8 and 2008–9.

• Over the past 2 years, OCDEL has observed a nearly 15 percent increase in the number of children receiving Early Intervention services included in typical early childhood programs, resulting in a total of 63 percent of all children in preschool Early Intervention receiving their services in these settings (e.g. child care, Head Start, preschool) in 2008–9.

Refine Accountability and Document Positive Outcomes for Children

• In 2008–9 Pennsylvania developed the Keystone STARS Technical Assistance Quality Assurance and Accountability System to support consistency and quality in technical assistance across the commonwealth.

• OCDEL continued development of Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN). In 2008–9, PELICAN Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts entered phase two. PELICAN Infant/Toddler Early Intervention was piloted in four counties and preparation began for development of PELICAN Preschool Early Intervention.

• The next phase of Pennsylvania's Early Learning Network began with Early Intervention programs and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs reporting child outcomes online through the Ounce and Work Sampling online reporting tools.

Results

• In 2008–9, ERS assessors conducted approximately 1,680 classroom assessments, a 75 percent increase from 2007–8.

• Nearly every child (99 percent) showed age-appropriate or emerging age-appropriate proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and social skills after attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program.

• 57 percent of the preschool children who entered Early Intervention after July 1, 2008 and exited Early Intervention prior to June 30, 2009 actually function within age expectations.

• 75 percent of children receiving Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services demonstrated that their original issues had ceased or had significantly decreased or that had been successfully referred to other support services.

Build Leadership in Our Communities and Among State Decisionmakers to Champion Quality Early Education as a Priority for Pennsylvania

• Governor Rendell created by Executive Order the Pennsylvania Early Learning Council and Early Learning Investment Commission as avenues to include the early education and business communities in policy development and outreach.

• Expanded Pennsylvania's Promise for Children campaign with upgraded Pennsylvania's Promise for Children Web site to include "Early Education in My County" and Tell Your Story sections.
• Community Engagement Groups reported that over 1.6 million children, parents and community members throughout the commonwealth were involved in events such as recognition events, legislative meetings, Week of the Young Child events, or community fairs.

Results

• Between July 2008–June 2009, the number of PA Promise declarations more than doubled from 4,303 to 9,887 declarations.
• Between July 2008–June 2009, the number of Build News subscribers more than doubled from 3,403 to 8,045 subscribers.

Vision for Tomorrow

Building a quality early education continuum is a marathon, not a sprint. Each year Pennsylvania has refined a system through continuous quality improvement and serving more children.

In 2009–10, Pennsylvania will continue its work to create a more seamless pathway of professional development for early childhood educators at all levels; increase accountability and documenting positive outcomes; align the early education system with the full education continuum; and build leadership at all levels.

2. USING THE OCDEL FRAMEWORK, A HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS TO DATE AND WORK IN PROGRESS

Planning Monitoring and Accountability

Have:

• Quantitative and qualitative measures to assess program quality and performance.
• Standards and support to help people and programs meet standards & expectations.
• Ranking of each community of risk to children and reach of OCDEL programs for all children.

Working on:

• Creating the Early Learning Network.
• One reporting system for assessment of children in ALL of our programs.
• Comprehensive data system taking into account child's background and public investment in the program.

Standards & Assistance to Meet Them

Have:

• Early Learning standards birth–2d grade that have been refined to fully mesh with 3rd grade standards in response to the alignment study we commissioned.
• Program quality standards.
• Early childhood professional standards.
• Early childhood career lattice.
• Professional development, technical assistance, and higher education assistance for building staff and program capacity.

Working on:

• Smooth transfer of college credit for practitioners from 2- to 4-year institutions, and across 4-year institutions of higher learning.
• Strengthening Families/Preventing Child Abuse implementation.
• Practices to support administrators and teachers in responding to the diverse needs of young learners.
• Integrating early childhood education into Pennsylvania's K–12 Standards Aligned System.

Financing

Have:

• New funding streams to fill some gaps in building ECE system.
• Strong connections between financing, standards and accountability.
• Help for providers to combine funds from different funding streams.

Working on:

• Help to address additional "gaps" in financing to reach children and to provide sufficient resources.

Parents: Engagement and Outreach

Have:

- Counseling: face to face, phone, computer search.
- Parent Advisory Council for input and advice.
- OCDEL wide parent survey for parents in all OCDEL programs on satisfaction and ideas for improvement.
- "Tip sheets".
- Advocacy training for parents.

Working on:

- On-line search for all early childhood programs.
- More parent engagement in public policy and outreach.

Partnerships: Engagement and Outreach

Strong commitment to leadership at all levels:

- Governor's Early Learning Council.
- Governor's Early Learning Investment Commission (CEO group).
- Public awareness campaign on value of quality early education.
- Engaging leaders and communities to become children's champions.

Strong partnerships with foundations/philanthropy.
Research and data to inform public policy and outreach.
Unified messaging and framework for all to use.

Senator CASEY. Todd, thank you very much.

I want to thank all of our witnesses. We've got about 20 minutes for a discussion and some questions. But, I did want to highlight a couple of points before we get to questions.

First of all, the reason we have field hearings like this is to inform and, I think, amplify the record on these issues for when we debate them in Washington. And in this case we're talking about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which a lot of people know by the popular name No Child Left Behind. All kinds of debates about what should change on No Child Left Behind. I'm sure if we went to every chair in this room, and every space in this room, someone would have an opinion about what to do. But, suffice it to say that this is not a hearing for our committee that is just to throw out theories. We have, as you've heard, a lot of very compelling evidence, either by way or research and data or real life experience here in Morrisville and places across the State, where this is working. And we know it's necessary.

One of the basic reasons to have a hearing like this—and by the way, it's rare that we have these hearings. We don't have many of these in the States, because we tend to be in Washington more. We're doing hearings there and we have the opportunity to do hearings in the State.

I want you to know also that, as we work on this reauthorization, despite what you've read and seen on healthcare, where there's a real partisan and party divide, I really believe, on a lot of this work, there's going to be bipartisanship. We hope there's substantial bipartisanship when it comes to early education, because it's critically important. This should not be a Democratic or Republican issue only. It should be a bipartisan issue, and I think it will.

I think we're seeing evidence already—or, I should say, "good examples" of bipartisanship, by way of the work of our two chairmen. The chairman, Chairman Tom Harkin, from Iowa, who took over for Senator Kennedy, when he passed away, and the Ranking Member, the Republican on the committee, Mike Enzi, from Wyoming. You have a Democrat and a Republican, who have different

philosophies, different points of view on a lot of issues, but on this issue, about education issues in particular, I think you're going to see some common ground.

I do not underestimate the work that it will take, however, even with bipartisanship, even with the reauthorization, to get done what we have to get done on early education. One of the reasons why we've decided to push forward with this hearing is because we not only have a reauthorization process, but I have a bill. And, candidly, it's the best bill in the Senate on this issue.

[Laughter.]

It's Senate bill 839. It's a bill that I introduced back in 2007 and 2008, and that Congress—as you know we have these Congresses in 2-year increments—and then I reintroduced it in 2009 for this Congress.

It has a couple of basic elements. First of all, we want to make sure that any early education program has a curriculum that's research-based. We want to make sure that the best teachers are available to those students in those environments. We want to make sure that if a State implements a plan or a program, that it's monitored and we see results. We're seeing good evidence of that in Pennsylvania. We want to make sure that a program like this doesn't compete with or injure or diminish the chances for funding and continued investments in Head Start and other early education or childcare programs. So, we don't want to have a pre-Kindergarten program replace Head Start. That's not what we're doing here. We want to have both. We need both. And I think that's an important point to make. We want to make sure that we focus in a particular way on low-income students in those communities across the State and across the country.

So, there are a lot of elements to that bill that I won't go through now, but suffice it to say that we've got a critically important opportunity here, and also, I think, an opportunity that doesn't come along very often.

I think Joan Benso's analogy is very important, when it comes to demonstrating that Pennsylvania led the way on children's health insurance that then became a national program. And it's important that we recognize how well Pennsylvania's done in the last 7 years on these issues. We know, from Joan's testimony and other testimony, Todd and others, about how well Pennsylvania has done, how far it has come. But, it cannot continue the journey substantially, cannot complete the journey, without help from the Federal Government.

I was noting, today, some of the testimony I thought that leaped off the page. Sometimes as important as the policy and the data is the evidence from testimony. Melissa Bowman's testimony, one phrase leaped off the page when I was reading it. In the fourth paragraph of her testimony, she said, "These children"—the children who had benefited from a good program—"left my class ready to be the leaders and role models in their new kindergarten classrooms." Ready to be the leaders and role models.

I think there's plenty of evidence to show that those children will not just be the leaders and the role models for the next grade level they go into, but, in fact, they can be—because of a program like this—the leaders and role models for society. And we know that

from the evidence. But, we also know—and I was looking at Joan's testimony—how challenging this is. With all the progress that's been made, with all of the good work and all of the investment that this State has made, we still have a long way to go. Part of Joan's testimony said there are about, "295,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania"—almost 300,000 kids, just 3 and 4 years old—"Less than 18 percent of these children have access to high-quality public-funded pre-K." Less than 18 percent; as she said, one in five.

So, we know the benefits. We know how well it works. But, we also know the shortfall. And the shortfall—the gap in funding is commensurate with the gap in achievement. And that's why the Federal Government has to ramp this up and get directly involved in a way that we've never done before.

Now, my original version of the bill, 2 years ago, had funding levels starting at $5 billion, going to $6 billion the second year, going to $7 billion the third year, and all the way up to a $9-billion funding level in year 5. I would like to be able to say my current version of the bill has that; it doesn't, for a very basic reason. We want to be realistic about the numbers in the funding, but we also don't want to shortchange or diminish or scale back our horizons. We have to do this. And we have to fund it.

The money question, the funding question, will be debated; whether it's a billion dollars or it's some number higher than that, we won't know for sure anytime soon. But we have to make sure that we're committed to doing this as a nation, for a lot of reasons.

I was reading some testimony from some Pennsylvanians who sent in letters, and I won't give away identities here, but this is from central Pennsylvania, where a parent writes about their son—or one parent, I should say, writes about their son, that, "This particular program provided him with new opportunities of learning and interaction." And then goes teacher by teacher and what those instructors, those teachers have meant to this child—and this is talking about one teacher—"She is willing to do whatever it takes to help him succeed. And she has displayed much patience"—and goes on from there—"the patience and the skill and the commitment of that teacher."

What we've got to do is, do the same, the same commitment that that teacher brings to that child, doing whatever it takes. That's the kind of commitment that we need here.

So, I wanted to ask a couple of questions. And the panel and the witnesses certainly can amplify on what I say, and ask their own questions. And maybe even, if we have a chance, some from the audience.

But, I guess I wanted to get a sense of—maybe starting with Dr. Yonson and Ms. Fina—when it comes to children with special needs, how do you compensate now for the fact that sometimes you don't have the resources that you need? And how do you think that would work, in terms of just getting from here to there, getting from a point where you don't have enough of the resources now, to where you'd like to be, with a full commitment to early education, especially for children that have special needs? Could you talk to that—speak to that?

Ms. YONSON. Well as you had—as all of the panelists indicated, this pre-K is funded because we have money from the State

through Pre-K Counts. And Mrs. Bowman also told you that she is now in kindergarten because the State had not passed their budget, which meant that perhaps we would not have a pre-Kindergarten program. We do not have money in our budget to have that pre-Kindergarten program.

I did a lot of writing to our legislators, and phone calls, to ensure that that would have been included in the budget. But, if we had not, we would not have had a pre-K program this year. And those children, the successes that you have seen, that I talked about, that my teachers shared with me, they just would not have been able to be realized in the future, because this class would not have been. Luckily, the State came through with the money for pre-K, and so we were able to continue. But, again, we only have so—there's so many more children that we could serve if there was more money available.

So, we do the best with what we have right now. Our teachers are excellent. They do a wonderful job. But, again, there's only so much in the pot. Now, if the children have not had a pre-quality experience and they come to us in kindergarten we identify those children who have special needs. And maybe it's not in kindergarten, it might be in first grade. But, the longer it takes to identify, the harder it is to bring the children up to that level playing field.

So, I think that it really is critical to continue pre-K. You might—I'm sure you do realize, Senator Casey, that, in Pennsylvania, kindergarten is not mandated. We do not—luckily, every single school district has it, but it is not something, in school code, that we must have a kindergarten. And so, here we're asking the State, and now the Federal Government, to assist us, because we know that, as another witness—I think, was Mrs. Fina—had said, "90 percent of a child's brain is formed by the time they're 5 years old." So, if we don't reach them early, we're way behind the eight ball. Way behind.

Ms. FINA. Senator Casey, we have a wonderful relationship with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. We have children who were identified before they came to us and children who have been identified in our program. And I believe we have therapists that come, probably 4 days a week, who spend time in our Pre-K Counts classroom. It has been enormously wonderful, this relationship. And I'm looking right at our IU people, right there. We have children that we need to identify. We give the parents the number, the parents call, the IU comes out.

Senator CASEY. Well, it's so important to be able to form those partnerships. And I have to say that the same kind of spirit, I think, has infused the partnerships that we've seen across the State. Joan Benso and I were recalling a decade ago, when this became more than just an issue for educators and for child advocates, it became an issue for the Pennsylvania Business Roundtable. You know, those CEOs of big companies, who are usually talking about taxes and regulation, and taxes and regulation, and taxes and regulation—that's all they, sometimes, focus on—were finally talking about investments in early learning, in terms of developing a stronger and more skilled workforce to be able to compete with countries around the world. So, we've gotten strong partnerships

from the business community, working with Governor Rendell and his team, working with educators and child advocates across the State.

I want to ask Joan and Dr. Ackerman, and Todd—any other points on the research that you didn't have a chance to make, or that would provide additional evidence for why we need to move forward with a Federal commitment here.

Ms. ACKERMAN. The only thing I would add is that, while the field does not yet have a precise input formula, in terms of, "If you do this, this, this, and this for this group of children, you're guaranteed this particular outcome," that there are no studies to suggest that, by using teachers that only have a high school degree, or not using a research-based curriculum, or not aligning your practice with early learning standards—no study demonstrates that, if you don't do those things, you're going to get those outcomes. So, for me, my final takeaway message would be to really focus on the quality of the program, in terms of all the things that were mentioned here today: teacher credentials, class size, sufficient funding so that a room can be equipped properly, access to support professionals, particularly for children with special needs, ongoing support and supervision for teachers, alignment with early learning standards, and very high program standards, as well.

Ms. BENSO. I think, Senator, that there's—in this really difficult economy that, you know, our communities and our State and our Nation are facing—I think, well-intentioned policymakers sometimes approach these matters by saying, "Well, let's cast the net really wide," and we end up going an inch deep, as opposed to going deep for fewer children. And I think the literature is extremely clear in early education, much more so than many other interventions for kids, because some of the research Dr. Ackerman spoke about today, she and her colleagues have been studying for more than 30 years. They didn't decide it last week.

I think what's most important is that, if we are going to use the taxpayers' dollars in this most difficult economic time, that we buy what works. And we know what works. So, to advance additional State funding or Federal funding without rigorous program guidelines is fool-hearted, and it's a waste of the taxpayers' money. And to back pedal where we have already strong State program guidelines, and in some areas strong Federal guidelines, would be the same.

So, I think the single most important thing I would like to see you continue to have leadership on is that, exactly as Dr. Ackerman said, quality matters. You know, it may take us 10 years or 20 more years so all preschoolers in Pennsylvania and in America benefit from a high-quality program, but giving more preschoolers a poor-quality program is not going to get us much of anything. So, deep. Go deep.

Senator CASEY. So, we'll make sure we have the adjective before pre-K, quality or high quality.

Ms. BENSO. Right. Right, high quality. And, you know, my flip humor—you know me too well—is, let's just not do pre-K light, because pre-K light's not going to work. And it may make us feel good to deal with how few children we're able to serve now, but in the long run it's a much more prudent investment of our taxpayers'

hard-earned dollars to invest in very high-quality programs and get results.

Ms. ACKERMAN. May I add one more thing?

Senator CASEY. Sure.

Ms. ACKERMAN. One thing that I would add, as well, is that I am not at all saying that pre-K should only take place in public schools. In fact, in New Jersey, which has an extremely high-quality program, 65 percent of the slots are in private providers and Head Start sites. But, the bottom line with that is, you need to hold all programs to the same exact high standards and provide the support for teachers in those other settings to improve their credentials and improve the program quality.

Ms. BENSO. And for Dr. Ackerman's benefit and the communities' benefit, that's exactly what we're doing in Pennsylvania. What, Todd, almost 70 percent of our program slots in pre-K are in community-based providers.

Senator CASEY. Todd, do you have anything to say?

Mr. KLUNK. I'd just like to add another group—or another angle of early childhood that's taken off lately is called "Mission: Readiness," and talk about that for a second. And it might resonate with some Members of Congress that they're actually now——

Senator CASEY. You said "Mission: Readiness."

Mr. KLUNK. "Mission: Readiness."

Senator CASEY. OK.

Mr. KLUNK. So, there's some retired generals from the Military who are making the stance that it's a national security issue, that 25 percent of our high school graduates are not eligible to enter the armed services. And that's for a variety of reasons, but—you know, they could be overweight, they could have a criminal record, but many of them lack just the preparedness that our military now requires.

So, I throw that out there, as well, that it could be a national security issue, as well.

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you very much.

I know we're almost out of time. I was going to do something that never happens in Washington—you can't tell anyone I did this—but we might have time for one question from the audience. Anybody? Anybody who wants to ask a question? No hands are going up.

Ma'am, right here.

VOICE. What are the biggest obstacles that you would face now, as a Senator, in trying to get—I think you said $9-billion funding?

Senator CASEY. Yes. I think—funding is one big obstacle, for sure, when you have the kind of fiscal situation we have. Obviously, in Washington, budget balancing isn't always the order of the day, and we now are in a position of deficits—substantial deficits. So, it gets harder and harder to fund a program that would be a new commitment, and that makes it a challenge.

The kind of year we're in, where you see the Congress struggling with healthcare, which is finally passed, but—you have a tough economy, where you have to continue to legislate on jobs and moving forward. I was noting that, here in Bucks County, the most recent job number, 8.1 percent unemployed, 28,600 people. That's a lot of people unemployed, even though the rate might seem a little

lower than parts of the country; the rest of the country's about 9.7. The State is about 8.9, so Bucks County is a little lower than those numbers. But, having almost 29,000 people out of work is a compelling reason to keep our eye on job-creation strategies.

So, you have a number of major initiatives that are making it difficult for us to spend the kind of time we need to spend on this reauthorization process. So, that obviously is another challenge.

But, I think it's mostly a question of funding. I think the commitment is there, even if Democrats and Republicans would disagree on the extent of commitment to early education, I think there's a pretty broad bipartisan belief that we ought to make these investments in early learning, because a lot of those CEOs are telling us, "Invest in early learning and you get a better GNP. Invest in early learning, you get a better workforce, you get a better economy." The folks saying that aren't all Democrats. There are a lot of Republican CEOs who believe that, as well. But, I think it's mostly a funding question, in terms of an impediment or a challenge, as well as the kind of year we're in, in a tough economy, with other issues making it difficult to legislate.

Well, with that, I know we've got to go, but maybe we can take some questions on the way out, because I know the hour is coming.

Thank you very much for everyone, not only your presence here, but for changing the time by half an hour to make a change in my schedule. Thanks very much, everyone.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:58 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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