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PENNSYLVANIA STATE SYSTEM
OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senate of Pennsylvania

January 24, 2022

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

As members of the Senate Democratic Caucus we are asking for bold investments in the early care and education sector in the eighth year of your administration and as part of your FY 2022-23 budget proposal. It is also critical to make these investments for the workforce in this sector as our economy recuperates, as we hope to emerge from the pandemic and support parents to return to work.

While progress has been made by the Biden Administration and this Congress between the American Rescue Plan and the proposed Build Back Better Act, to date, funds received by the state have been one-time stimulus dollars that cannot be used for recurring costs. Further, any funds that may be realized in the Build Back Better Act will not be available for the FY 2022-23 state budget. That means it is incumbent on us as champions for early childhood issues to advance meaningful state budget increases during this interim period.

That is why the below members of the Senate Democratic Caucus urge you to increase funding for the state's pre-k, child care and home visiting budget line items:

Child care

- Implement a minimum wage scale, which recognizes position and degree/credential achievement, for programs which participate in the subsidized child care program, as a per child payment, phased in over a three-year period. Add-ons would be provided recognizing quality level, subsidy enrollment and calibration for regional cost differences. A separate payment would be made for each private pay child in the program. With a median wage in 2019 for child care workers of only \$10.69/hour and \$13.96/hour for preschool teachers, Pennsylvania is beyond overdue to address low pay in the sector that causes high turn-over, staffing shortages, and more recently, rolling classroom closures or center closures exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Increase credential and degree attainment opportunities to increase the supply of highly qualified teachers.
- Serve 3,000 new eligible infants and toddlers in high-quality contracted slots, focusing on the age group where the cost of care is the highest.
- Maintain Child Care Works funding and conduct a state-funded public advertising campaign for the program, similar to what is done in CHIP, to return to pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

Pre-K

- Research specific to our own state Pre-K Counts program just released a year ago has shown that it works and is a wise state investment. Programs in the Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance areas must also be provided with an appropriate rate to serve children in high-quality settings.
- In highlighting your legacy of championing pre-k education, we ask that you reach the total number of additional children served by high-quality pre-k during your term in office to be 25,000. To achieve that, an additional 6,894 3- and 4-year-old children must be served in the FY 2022-23 budget.

Home Visiting

- Your administration gained nationwide attention several years ago with its commitment to investing in evidence-based home visiting programs. Contained in the Community-Based Family Center Line and only receiving approximately \$4 million in federal stimulus funds to date, these programs have been flat-funded since 2019. Families have relied on these services as a lifeline through the pandemic and to reaffirm your earlier commitment, an investment of funds in the FY 2022-23 budget should double the current number of pregnant women, young children, and families receiving evidence-based home visiting services.
- Home visiting services are also provided through the separate Nurse-Family Partnership line, which should accordingly be increased to offer additional services to families.

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Wise investments with state dollars can bring the Commonwealth out of these challenging past few years to ensure that children have high-quality child care and that parents have these options so that they can go to work. We look forward to you setting the high-water mark this February and you can look to us to be your partners leading the effort in the halls of the capitol to fight for these important investments for our Commonwealth's children and families.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Judith Schwank

State Senator - 11th District



Art Haywood

State Senator - 4th District



Steve Santarsiero

State Senator - 10th District



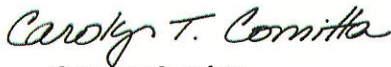
Katie Muth

State Senator - 44th District



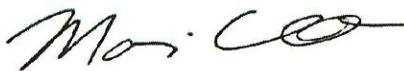
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State Senator - 38th District



Carolyn Comitta

State Senator - 19th District



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State Senator - 12th District



Anthony Williams

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Wayne Fontana

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