

PRE-K WORKS, SO WHY NOT PA?

If kids could vote, they would support candidates who commit to investing in early learning programs such as high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten because it provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to our young learners helping to prepare them to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Children can't vote but thankfully Pennsylvania voters, including a large cadre of powerful business, civic, education, health care, law enforcement and military leaders, will head to the polls in 2018 to elect a governor, state legislators and U.S. Congress members. Rest assured that when each of them heads into the voting booth, they will know the position of every candidate on expanding access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten. Why? Because high-quality **pre-k works** – it helps children learn, grow and develop and reaps strong economic returns in the future.

"The time to make Pennsylvania a leader in high-quality pre-k investments is now. There is no better investment in our children, our communities and the future economic vitality of our commonwealth. Our kids have only one chance to benefit from high-quality, publicly funded pre-k. We are proud of the bipartisan support pre-k now enjoys in our state, but we can and must do better."

**– Former Pennsylvania Governors
Edward G. Rendell and Mark S. Schweiker**

ONLY
36%
OF
ELIGIBLE CHILDREN
**IN PA BENEFIT FROM HIGH-QUALITY,
PUBLICLY FUNDED PRE-K**

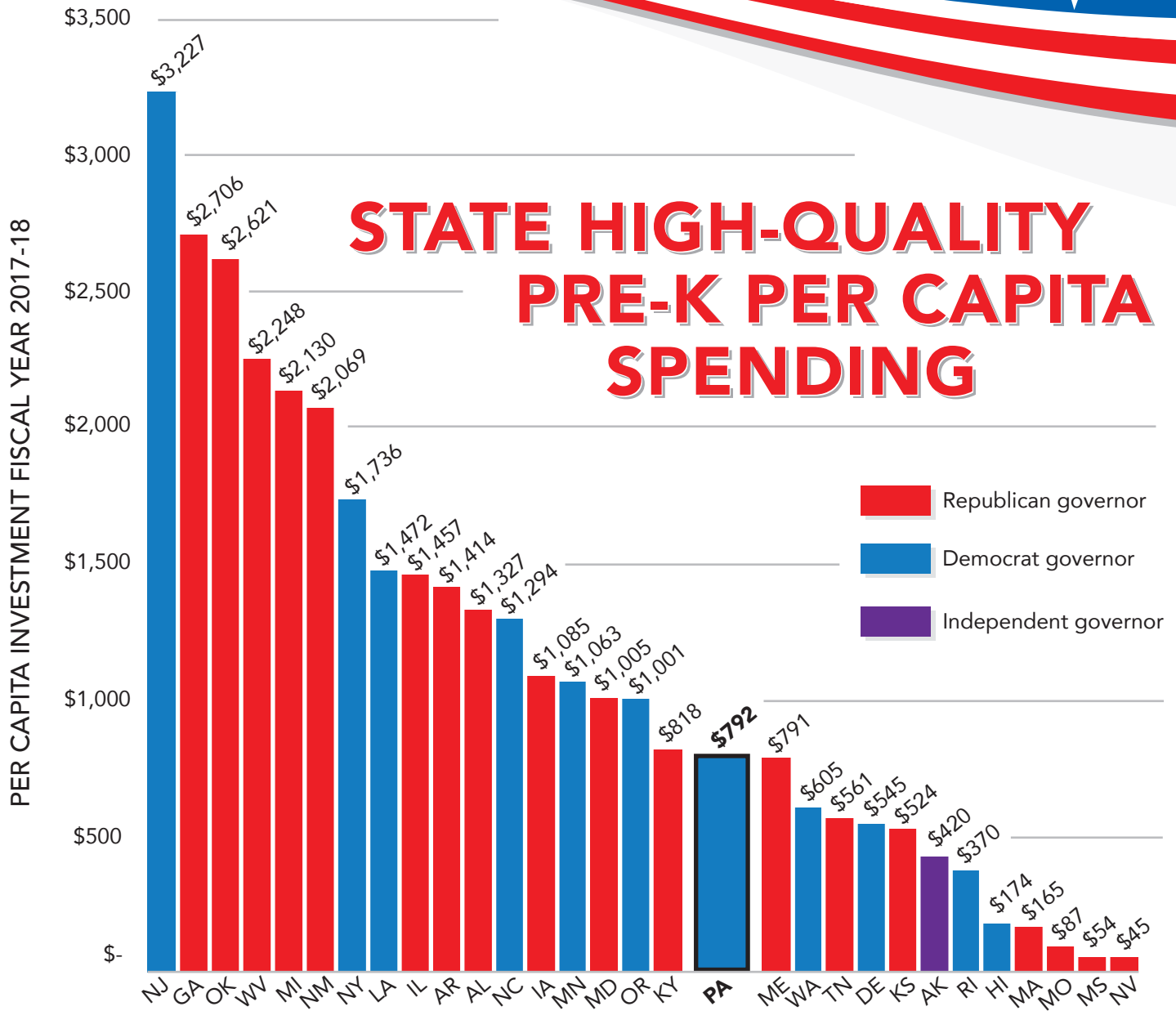
High-quality pre-k reduces costs for future employers as students gain soft skills as part of their experience. This includes developing character and social skills, learning to resolve conflict, and how to negotiate... all qualities that employers need and covet when looking to hire.¹

High-quality, publicly funded pre-k helps lay the foundation for a more competitive Pennsylvania and voters will support candidates who commit to policies and investments that will improve Pennsylvania's competitiveness. Creating a competitive advantage for Pennsylvania starts with strong investments in early learning, such as high-quality, publicly funded pre-k that prepares children for success in school and lays the learning foundation and skill development for a stronger workforce.

However, Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness is compromised in part due to our relatively small pre-k investments. Only 36 percent of eligible children in the commonwealth benefit from high-quality, publicly funded pre-k.

Pennsylvania ranks 18th out of 30 states that make public investments in high-quality pre-k. This is despite having increased its per capita investment by \$30 million for the current fiscal year.





"There is no issue that I concern myself with more than the future of Pennsylvania's workforce. My company looks to policymakers and candidates for office to make investments that will ensure not only today's workforce but the workforce of tomorrow. We look for individuals who have both the hard and soft skills required to fill jobs in our new economy. One of the wisest investments we can make in our future workforce is stronger public investments in high-quality pre-kindergarten."

**– Peter J. Danchak, President,
Northeast PA PNC Bank, Scranton**

In 2018, public funding for pre-k will be important to voters not only in Pennsylvania, but in many other states as 12 of the 17 states that invest more per capita than Pennsylvania also will head to the polls to elect a governor. Some of these states include Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New York and Oklahoma and include both red and blue states – some with world class cities, strong inner-ring suburbs and rural communities that drive state economies.

Other states are outpacing Pennsylvania, putting us at a serious competitive disadvantage even with neighboring states such as New York (\$1,736), New Jersey (\$3,227), Maryland (\$1,005) and West Virginia (\$2,248), all of which invest more per capita than Pennsylvania (\$792).

WHY NOT PA?

Why isn't Pennsylvania making greater investments when 64 percent of at-risk, eligible children across the commonwealth – or 112,900 – remain unserved and are unable to attend high-quality pre-k? These unserved children are missing out on an enriching experience that will help them develop the foundational skills necessary for Pennsylvania to grow a competent and qualified workforce.

When a child is afforded a high-quality pre-k experience, he or she enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. Research shows children who attended high-quality pre-k are more likely to read proficiently in third grade, graduate from high school, attend post-secondary education and become successful in the workplace.²

High-quality, publicly funded pre-k has enjoyed continuous bipartisan support in Pennsylvania, and policymakers have demonstrated their commitment to early learning. Not surprisingly, this support aligns with voter sentiments. According to a 2017 national poll, 74 percent of the electorate says that quality early childhood education sets children up for academic success in elementary school, and 69 percent of voters say high-quality early childhood programs lead to a larger pool of highly skilled workers in the long term.³

Access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-k is good for Pennsylvania's future workforce and this connection will not be lost when Pennsylvanians head to the polls in 2018.

Year after year, in Pennsylvania and across the nation, the economy and education are among the top issues weighing on the minds of voters. Candidates who commit to stronger state investments in high-quality pre-k will be proposing a winning combination for voters on both fronts.

Pennsylvania voters are not easily swayed by catchy slogans and rhetoric – it is proven strategies to improve our state that moves them. Research studies align with Pennsylvania voters' values – they know pre-k matters and investing in high-quality pre-k will yield strong, lasting economic benefits for our state.

"Pennsylvanians are practical people. They support public investments that are results-oriented and proven to help our citizens succeed and our economy flourish. Pre-k is such an investment as it is proven to help children start their education on strong footing and builds a foundation that leads each child down a pathway where he or she will be an important contributor to the local economy and the state's economic well-being. That is why I support more public investments in pre-k and candidates for public office who do, too."

**– Nick Scott, Jr., Vice President,
Scott Enterprises, Erie**

- Pre-k investments save taxpayer dollars by reducing the need for special education and remedial instruction, and increase graduation rates and college enrollment.
- At-risk children who attend high-quality pre-k are less likely to commit a crime later in life, which reduces taxpayer costs associated with public safety, prosecution and incarceration.
- Over the long term, every dollar invested in high-quality pre-k returns the commonwealth \$4 in savings and benefits in the form of reduced crime, increased earning power, and more.⁴



"When I consider who to vote for, I sort out the candidate's position on issues that will help my business grow such as regulatory and tax issues. But I also heavily consider the candidate's position on funding for high-quality, publicly funded pre-k. Research has demonstrated that the traits a child develops by attending high-quality pre-k such as being adaptable and learning to problem solve, are many of the same skills we seek in successful job applicants."

**– Michael Smeltzer, President,
Advancement Solutions LLC, York**

In the last three years, the governor and the General Assembly made important progress in ensuring more at-risk children can attend high-quality pre-k. Additional investments in Pre-K Counts and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) have had an impact in addressing the unmet need as approximately 10,000 additional at-risk children were enrolled in a pre-k program that would have otherwise missed this critical opportunity.

But it isn't enough. The 2018 elections are an opportunity for those seeking public office to commit to making Pennsylvania a top state by increasing investments in high-quality, publicly funded pre-k.

To reach all children who would most benefit, our state policymakers should invest \$85 million in the 2018-19 fiscal year to double the expansion of the last three years, and grow the investment with an additional \$225 million by the 2020-21 fiscal year to serve all at-risk children.

As Pennsylvanians head to the polls in 2018, they will be asking about pre-k and will want to know, **"Why Not PA?"**

Is high-quality, publicly funded pre-k a priority for the state candidates you support?

Make sure you know where your candidates stand. Pennsylvania's future depends on it.



717.236.5680 • 800.257.2030
116 Pine Street, Suite 430
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1244

papartnerships.org



www.prekforpa.org

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is a principal partner of the statewide Pre-k for PA Campaign

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT project, The Donley Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, PNC Financial Services Group and the William Penn Foundation.
- Supporting research for this report can be found at www.papartnerships.org/prekinpa