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## **Testimony of Michael A. Nutter**

Michael A. Nutter, Mayor  
City of Philadelphia

Good afternoon Ms. Esterling, Ms. Jemmott, and members of the Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten, my name is Michael Nutter, and I am the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Commission and, more importantly, thank you for your commitment to the citizens and families of this great city and for your dedication to the important work before you.

As Mayor, since my first day in office, I have said that if we want a better-educated, more skilled and capable workforce that grows our economy and makes Philadelphia a safer and more prosperous city, then we must make education a priority.

On May 19, 2015, a ballot question calling for the establishment of the Commission on Universal Pre-K in the City's Charter was approved with an overwhelming majority of voters (more than 80%) supporting the measure. I consider that vote to be a proud moment for Philadelphia. And it could not have happened without the leadership of Councilwoman Jannie L. Blackwell, who sponsored the legislation and carefully shepherded it through City Council.

But now the work of realizing the vision of high quality Pre-K for every child in the City lies ahead of us. The citizens of this city are counting on this Commission to use its ingenuity and expertise to find equitable and sustainable funding solutions to guarantee universal pre-kindergarten. And following that, the City's government—Council and the Administration together—along with the citizens of Philadelphia, will ultimately be called upon to take the bold and challenging steps necessary to make universal pre-k an educational reality.

Investments in high-quality pre-kindergarten will support long-term gains for our children and our city to thrive. Studies illustrate tangible benefits for children who participate in high-quality early education programs: increased performance in school overall; improved social skills; fewer behavioral problems; decreased enrollment in special education classes; increased high school graduation rates; and increased earnings potential.

To put it simply, children benefit greatly from high-quality early learning opportunities, and those benefits ripple through our workforce, economy, and communities. But at root, they mean happier, more fulfilling lives. Today, Philadelphia is a more diverse, safe, educated, and prosperous city than in decades. However, in order to maintain and grow these gains, we must face one of the greatest obstacles holding Philadelphia back.

Persistent poverty, as with many big cities across the country, is a major threat to our city. Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate of the top ten cities in America at 26%. More than a quarter of our population, including 123,000 children, struggle through poverty every day. Only a third of Philadelphia's low-income three and four year-olds have access to high-quality pre-k. Tens of thousands of children are being left behind before they're even given an opportunity to succeed.

In summer 2013, the City launched a comprehensive anti-poverty plan – “Shared Prosperity Philadelphia” – managed by the Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity (CEO). In Summer 2015, CEO released “A Running Start Philadelphia”, the citywide early learning plan that seeks as one of its strategies to make high-quality universal pre-k available to every child whose family wishes them to attend. It is crucial that this work be considered by the Commission.

I encourage the Commission to seriously consider the testimony submitted by Philadelphia’s citizens today—teachers, parents, childcare providers, advocates, and concerned citizens. These individuals and the organizations and community members they represent bring important insights and highlight significant challenges to the creation of a high-quality early education system in Philadelphia. And this public input and feedback will serve to enhance the development of your final recommendations.

Remaking Philadelphia’s early learning system is a tremendous task, which will require committed leadership and persistent efforts. In order to lead and grow as a city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must ensure that all children are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs. Doing so will help break the cycle of persistent poverty faced by far too many Philadelphians, and give all children the foundation they need to reach their fullest potential.

I thank you for your service to our city and for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

## Testimony of Damaris Alvarado

Damaris Alvarado  
Executive Director  
Cookies Daycare Center

My name is Damaris Alvarado and I am the Executive Director to Cookie's Daycare Center, located at 2135 South 17<sup>th</sup> Street in South Philadelphia. Cookie's is a Keystone STARS 4 facility that provides Pre-K services to approximately thirty-five children from ages 3-5. I was one of the many childcare centers in Philadelphia that applied for the 2015-2016 Pre-K Counts award from the state. Throughout the years the high demand for quality pre-kindergarten has increased but many families have limited access to it (For example, the only Pre-K Counts program in our area is in childcare, Keystone STARS 3 facility).

As a small childcare center, in South Philadelphia, and a member of this community, I have dedicated the past eleven years in making sure that the families in South Philadelphia receive quality early childcare education and that they are provided with other support such as, referring to Elwyn, Child Link, TSA's, PCA's, behavioral support, speech, occupational therapy, etc. Cookie's staff has taken it a little further by helping families that are in need of CCW application guidance, translation services, copy and fax services, kindergarten transitions and placements, creating fund raisers, and credited tuition costs for families in need and has lost their homes or just going through a bad time. These are just a few of the things that we do in order to support our families and our community.

When asked to write a testimony for the Pre-K Commission, I sat back and started thinking about what else I could possibly say to prove to them that accessible, quality pre-k programs are in desperate need. After all, the statistics and research is at your reach so, I decided to bring it to a personal level. I asked some of the families, that I serve or have served, to provide me with a testimony that I could share with the Commission and this is one of the many life-changing stories I received:

*I for one will always be thankful to the staff of cookies. You guys took care of my son as well as if not better than I could have even if it was possible to be a full time stay at home mom. I was fortunate enough to be able to afford to pay for daycare and pre-k. If not for your education and knowledge of children I would have just thought my son would have grown out of his speech problem. No one not even his pediatrician told me to seek out speech help. Thankfully not only did you bring it to my attention you even got me in touch with all the right people. After getting services for my son you sat in meeting with the therapist. You monitored and questioned her every move. Things I would not have otherwise known to ask. When my son went to kindergarten he was above par on many of the things they were teaching. Proud to say honor roll every semester since. Every teacher I talk to tell me he is respectful, caring of others, and well behaved. I only say that because he is an only child at home so it would be easy for him to be selfish, bratty. But I believe whole heartily that his behavior, mannerisms, and lack of separation anxiety is due to being expose*

*to other child in a structured but fun learning environment. Yes our family does play a part and I do take great pride in how great he is. But there is just some things he would have not been exposed to if not for pre-k such as other nationalities, religion, cultures, that he would have not been around had he not gone. Bringing exposed to all things when they are younger makes for a more tolerant, accepting, curious citizen of the world. I believe all children no matter their family circumstances ( poor, rich, black, white, blue or purple, perfect parents, drug addict parents, single parents, no parents, grandparents, working or not) all deserve a chance. None asked to be brought into this world but they are here and if giving a chance who know what they could achieve. I once seen on tv (don't remember where) but it said "what if the cure for cancer is stuck in the mind of a child that was born into the wrong circumstances"*

*Testimony By Charice Cimini mother of Nicholas Goga*

This is just one of many families that I have served that has had positive outcomes in school because of the work we have done. If we can be a part of expanding quality pre-k in Philadelphia to more children, we will continue to provide quality prekindergarten services and support families in an entire new level with more resources. Our center services 30% of children with IEP's and that receives services and the funding will help us continue to provide these families and others with the resources they need. Help us help children unleash their minds.

## **Testimony of Erin Richburg**

Erin Richburg  
Instructional Specialist  
Office of Early Childhood Education, School District of Philadelphia

My name is Erin Richburg and I have the privilege of working as an Instructional Specialist with Head Start preschool programs in Philadelphia. I have the opportunity to watch children hold crayons and pencils for the first time, pick up books with curiosity, learn how to initiate play with peers and create art with new and interesting materials. These experiences build the foundation for school readiness and later school success. The amount of growth and confidence that these children show throughout the year is one reason why I love working with preschool programs.

High quality preschool programs not only focus on exposing children to academic content, but they also help children with their emotional and social development. They learn to identify their feelings, they learn how to ask for help and solve problems. They learn that they are part of a community. And for those children that may need extra support with motor skills, speech or cognitive learning, there is a much better chance of catching those needs early and receiving extra support to eliminate further delay.

In my experience, preschool programs that are based inside of school buildings benefit families in many ways. Most parents bringing older siblings to school find it easier to have one school to drop off and pick up. The families begin to develop relationships with school staff and administration earlier than they would if they were not school based. Many families I have interacted with find that they rather have a traditional school schedule because they have older siblings that follow that same schedule.

Lastly, what I believe is one of the most important aspects of the preschool program is that it is designed to be a family program. Everything from providing resources and support for struggling parents, to providing job opportunities and encouraging parents to be involved with their child's education through numerous volunteering opportunities. The best preschool programs are created to be family programs.

Every child, regardless of income, should be able to benefit from high quality preschool programs that can positively affect the whole family and support school readiness.

## **Testimony of Maria Hughes**

Maria Hughes  
Citizen

So much research has shown that early academics is not helpful to preschool children, and I worry that instead of play-based pre-K, the school district will overburden young children with expectations that they read or sit still for extended periods of time before they even enter kindergarten. The pre-K years should be filled with lots of physical activity and child-directed play. Play is a proven means of working through stresses which I imagine many children in this very poor city deal with on a daily basis. To have a safe place to work through these issues and learn to negotiate with other children in appropriate and healthy ways would be an amazing opportunity for the young children of Philadelphia.

So while I applaud the city for initiating pre-k, I also hope that the programs themselves will serve the children rather than a testing agenda, which may ultimately turn children off from school and learning.

## **Testimony of Melissa Murray Bailey for Mayor Campaign**

Melissa Murray Bailey for Mayor Campaign

Melissa Murray Bailey recognizes the critical importance of education experiences during the early years. Research over the years clearly demonstrates that high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs produce short and long term positive effects on children's cognitive and social development. Melissa is committed to creating opportunity for young children to have access to early education and is open to continuing the work that The Commission for Universal Pre-K has begun.

## **Testimony of Steve Honeyman**

Steve Honeyman  
Organizational Development Consultant

My name is Steve Honeyman and I live at 2705 Magnolia Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038. I am an organizational development consultant and a community organizer having worked with Philadelphia for Early Childhood Education, DVAEYC, Child Space, The Pre-School Project, The Early Childhood Education Collaborative, Woodland Academy other non-profits and a number of foundations and statewide efforts. My educational background is political science and English literature and journalism. I was the first male to teach at the Temple University Dar Care Center in 1973 and a substitute 3rd grade teacher in 1974 in Philadelphia. I have also been involved in public education school reform for close to 25 years.

The focus of my remarks will be on equity and quality throughout the Philadelphia neighborhoods and funding strategies for a universal pre-k system. In many ways, the City of Philadelphia needs its own costing out study. This would allow us to determine the real needs for quality early childhood education in each neighborhood. Some of this work has already been completed especially in terms of existing Keystone Stars 3 and 4 slots. But, there are other criteria to consider including race and culture and class. These measurements contribute and go beyond the issues of supply and demand. For example: Some cultures may be more inclined to have their children looked after by family or friends for reasons of traditions and trust; Families might look to geographic convenience and extra benefits from a program or center; Issues of transportation and work schedules might also impact.

Also, if the leadership of centers and programs do not reflect the people of the community, there may be less of an inclination to send your children to the center or program with a higher quality.

In this costing out study by neighborhood, we must also consider how we improve existing centers and programs that have been fixtures in that neighborhood or have attracted large numbers of families. In essence, a large scale public education campaign is a priority on moving universal pre-k forward.

The funding formula for universal pre-k is one of the components that can either make or break this effort. Teacher salaries must be one of the highest priorities. If this is a mix of district and charter and non-profit schools, this becomes increasingly complicated. Obviously, we need to look closely at how this is funded in NY and other locations. But, to galvanize public support, a local tax contribution is essential. Some communities have devised “a children’s tax” and others some tax on corporations and/or the wealthy residents. Need and developing a neighborhood profile and funding go hand in hand.

## **Testimony of Dolores Shaw**

Dolores Shaw  
ECE Advocate

Good Afternoon. My name is Dolores Shaw and I am a longtime supporter of Philadelphia public schools. I am the mother of three children that attended preschool. I have a grandson that attended pre-school and I have a long involvement in education reform. All my children attended pre-school programs. They had the advantage of being prepared for school. As a parent, I was heavily involved in pre-school activities. I know and understand the value of a pre-school education for all of our children.

Two years ago I worked with a group of ECE advocates, providers, parents and community members to encourage the city to make a successful 500 K investment in ECE. This investment helped some providers to make capital improvements to expand their enrollment.

As the city moves forward with new and more comprehensive early childhood education Initiatives, it is important that we keep in mind the ECE workers across the city. Salaries are not in line with expectation of the work performed. Starting salaries are often only slightly higher than minimum wage. Most ECE employees have families of their own to support so current wage levels often leave them living in poverty and without the means to care for their families as they care for other children.

We must build in more economic opportunities for ece workers to advance in terms of increasing their salaries and furthering their education. This would have the advantage of creating a more educated workforce to care for our children.

I am asking that you consider the economic supports that would provide better starting salaries and educational opportunities for ece workers. Our children deserve the highest caliber of teachers we can provide them. It is vital component of jump starting them to a quality public school education. I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

## Testimony of Kevin Dow

Kevin Dow  
Vice President  
Impact for the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

Good afternoon, members of the Commission and other guests, my name is Kevin Dow. I am the Senior Vice President of Impact for the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

*Shared Prosperity Philadelphia*, the City's plan to reduce poverty, provides the guidepost and clear action steps for addressing critical issues in the city such as workforce development, housing insecurity, financial stability, early learning and benefits access. *A Running Start*, which was unveiled in June 2015, offers the framework for building quality early learning in Philadelphia and demonstrates the City's commitment to ensuring children in Philadelphia have access to quality early learning from the time they are born through age 5.

Similarly, at United Way, we work to ensure children get a quality education from cradle to career, families achieve financial stability, and all community members live healthy lives and have their basic needs met. Early childhood education is the foundation of everything we do. We know that a quality early education is the "great equalizer" – the experience that can set a child, no matter his or her background, on the path to success. If we can get it right in the first five years, it changes everything.

We believe all children should enter kindergarten ready to learn. That's why United Way was an active participant in the Mayor's Early Learning Advisory Council (MELAC), which helped shape the City's child care plan and co-leads one of the working groups around supply of quality child care. United Way intends to stay involved and engaged as an early childhood education funder, convener and program partner as outcomes from *A Running Start* begin to materialize and the City moves forward to construct a quality early learning system that can serve all families and children.

As you will hear today, we desperately need quality child care for families and children in our city. In Philadelphia, 63% of our children live at or near poverty. This means many of our residents are facing challenges everyday which limit their ability to provide the tools to their children to ensure school readiness. This also means that organizations such as United Way, bodies such as the Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten, officials from city, state and federal government and institutions like the School District of Philadelphia must be ready to work collectively to make sure our children have access to quality early learning programs that prepare them for kindergarten.

United Way has been shaping early care and learning in Philadelphia for over 15 years. Our Early to Learn program, the predecessor to Success By 6® focused on providing extensive resources to child care programs to enable them to reach quality. Since 2007, the Success By 6® program has

been an anchor, early education initiative in Philadelphia by providing child care centers with intensive technical assistance, program improvement resources, trauma education, training and peer learning opportunities to achieve higher quality. In Philadelphia, 57% of the child care centers that are STAR 3 or 4 are Success By 6® programs. Since the program's inception in 2007, there have been 77 child care centers in Philadelphia serving over 4,600 children have achieved and sustained the quality rating of Keystone STAR 3 or 4.

For the past two years, United Way has been a principal partner in the Pre-K for PA campaign, a statewide advocacy campaign working to ensure all 3- and 4- year olds in Pennsylvania have access to publically funded quality early education. As a partner in this initiative we have been able to make funding Pre-K a priority in Pennsylvania's last gubernatorial election. As a result of the Pre-K for PA Campaign, all the candidates for governor in 2014 made funding for Pre-Kindergarten a key part of their campaign platforms.

We know most of our City's policymakers understand the need for quality child care in Philadelphia. I am also here to testify because I want to clearly convey the significant cost challenges associated with operating high quality child care programs. A recent report from the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) spelled out the economic challenges of the business of child care and showed that child care providers are barely making ends meet. The essential fixed costs of caring for children are not met by early childhood education revenue sources. The primary source of revenue for child care providers serving low-income families is government subsidies. Given this structure, the NFF report shows that child care providers have a gap of at least a 23% for high-quality care.

This means that child care providers who want to be high quality and serve children with the greatest need are operating at deficit or barely surviving. We cannot allow this to continue. I urge the Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten to develop a plan that allows all 3 and 4- year olds in Philadelphia to have access to publically funded quality Pre-K. As stakeholders in early education and as a community, we must use our collective resources to ensure that all of our children have access to quality early childhood education and child care providers receive adequate resources to provide this care.

The City of Philadelphia is now poised to improve the early learning landscape in our city with initiatives like *A Running Start*, the Read! By 4<sup>th</sup> Campaign, and the creation of this Commission. Working together, we can make quality child care a reality for all families in Philadelphia.

## **Testimony of James Waddington, Jr.**

James Waddington, Jr.  
Director of Strategic Marketing Solutions, Lockheed Martin  
Member, PA Early Learning Investment Commission

Thank you, I am happy to be here today. My name is James Waddington; I am the Director of Strategic Marketing Solutions under Lockheed Martin. I am also a member of the Governor's Early Learning Investment Commission, also known as ELIC.

ELIC is a group of 76 business leaders from across the state – 16 from the Greater Philadelphia region – who know it is important we prepare children with the capabilities and skills required to compete in a growing global economy. Since 90 percent of the human brain is developed by age 5, our members realize that we miss a critical window by waiting to educate children until they reach kindergarten.

If you are interested in seeing who is on ELIC, I have included a roster with my written testimony. It is an amazing group of individuals. And I have come today to express our collective support for the development of a comprehensive, pioneering plan to fund and implement universal, high-quality pre-kindergarten in Philadelphia.

You likely do not need a business person to tell you that the U.S. is facing changing workforce demands, and that tomorrow's workforce is entering school today.

What's interesting is that close to 65% of young people will stay right here in Philadelphia and become part of our local workforce...in less than 20 years!

For the next two decades, they'll be learning how to think, act, and compete in an increasingly competitive global economy.

In fact, by 2018, all but the youngest baby boomers will be of retirement age. About 76 million boomers will retire and only about 51 million people are in line to replace them – a 25-million-worker gap.

We are particularly vulnerable to this challenge because today's workforce has a need for employees well-trained in science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM skills. And just as important as STEM skills are more basic skills that allow adults to work on a team, display leadership, think critically, and to adapt to changing situations. Those skills, known as executive function skills, were valued more highly than an applicant's college major by 93% of 300 employers surveyed.

Tests measuring different forms of executive function skills indicate that they begin to develop shortly after birth, with ages 3 to 5 being a window of opportunity for the most dramatic growth. Research also confirms that the brain is particularly receptive to learning math and logic (STEM) between the ages of 1 and 4.

Business leaders also realize that it is more costly for us as a society to wait to invest. We know that school districts can save substantial money when children start school ready to learn since schools don't need to invest as much in costly remediation and grade repetition.

Children who attend quality early learning programs are up to 48 percent less likely to be placed in special education and 51 percent less likely to be held back in school. They are also far more likely to graduate high school.

Without a quality early childhood education, not only will many kids struggle in school and fail to graduate, but they will likely make bad life decisions that lead to crime, teen pregnancy, and dependence on government programs.

On a personal note, my wife is a long-time pre-school teacher and my four children are all products of quality early learning programs. Their success and the success of my wife's former students is a testament to the efficacy of these programs.

It is for these reasons and many more that ELIC urges the members of the Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten to develop an innovative strategy to increase quality and accessibility of early learning programs in Philadelphia.

Thank you so much for listening to me today. It is my hope your work will help to make Philadelphia a stronger, more vibrant community.

## **Testimony of Mark Kehoe**

Mark Kehoe  
CEO Brightside Academy

My name is Mark Kehoe. I am the CEO of Brightside Academy.

Brightside Academy provides early education and childcare services to approximately 8,000 children each day in Pennsylvania, Ohio and NYC. We have over 1,500 employees in the three states we operate.

Our Purpose is to provide all families' access to an excellent early educational experience to ensure their children become life-long learners in an every changing world.

In Philadelphia County, we serve approximately 4,000 children each day at our 27 academies

We provide Head Start services to 600+ children in partnership with the School District and PHMC

We are a Pre-K Counts provider in contract with the OCDEL

27 of 27 Philadelphia based Brightside Academy's are Star 3 or Star 4

In Pennsylvania, we have 35 of 36 academies at Star 3 or 4

In addition, we have 2 academies achieve NAEYC accreditation

We have made great progress with so much more to do

Our Brightside Academy Philadelphia Team is 600+ strong.

Brightside Academy is one of the largest UPK partners in NYC's expansion efforts

Brightside Academy has a direct federal Head Start grant in Toledo, Ohio

Prior to joining Brightside Academy, I spend 19+years at Quest Diagnostics senior leadership roles in my different functions and geographies.

My primary objectives in my testimony today with such limited time is to (1) reinforce the critical elements of what research states are required for an effective child readiness program AND (2) reinforce that time is our enemy.

### **Let's start with time:**

There are approximately 1,800 days between the day a child is born and the day they go to kindergarten. These early days of development are attributed as having the greatest impact on what can be achieved for the rest of that child's life. Early education many times gets labeled as a soft

initiative because so much is learn thru play and child experience BUT in reality it is neuroscience / brain development that most parents, independent of income level, truly comprehend the significance of a child's early years.

Every 360 days we wait to implement. We lose 20% of a child's lifetime in the most important time for school preparation.

If we focus just on preschool – we lose a generation of 4 year olds every year we wait.

For every 4 year old today that goes to kindergarten unprepared there is a high probability that they will not graduate high school and we know the long term negative consequences of this.

Time just keeps ticking....we can not wait for the perfect solutions...we need to start now and continuously make improvements. NYC put a stake in the ground and said in one year, we will get 2/3rds of all 4 years olds in high quality UPK programs.

**My 2<sup>nd</sup> objective is the focus on what is best for the children facing the greatest needs:**

Please...when policy decisions are being made, remember these 3 principles; which the latest research demonstrates, leads to the best child outcomes

**Dosage:**

The more time a child spends in a high quality early educational experiences is critical to the overall effectiveness with the intervention process to prepare a child for school

6 hours /day is the minimum starting point (a) full year vs. school year is the next big hurdle

Remember 1800 days---we need to maximize the time for children especially for the children facing the greatest risks and stresses associated with living in poverty.

The trap is that we recognize that money is limited so we feel better by putting 2 children in 3.5 hour/day programs but the facts show this is making us feel better only and not really preparing children at the percentages and numbers we need to make a difference in the communities at most at risk

**Continuity of positive relationships:**

Children need consistency in positive relationships to ensure the appropriate social and emotional development which is equally important to knowing their alphabet

Two big policy issues related here:

Professionalizing the workforce to ensure teachers have the skills vs just the credentials and that we have teacher retention rates greater than 80%

Ensuring a network of providers that is comprised of public schools and high quality community based early education providers that provide dual services: early education for children and childcare support services to working families that allows a continuity of relationship for the children.

### **Intentionality of Curriculum**

Love and Nurture are not enough. We need a workforce that we trust but also have confidence in that they understand how to implement an educational program that expects to prepare children.

I love my mother and trust her with my life but I don't have confidence in her ability to do surgery on me. We need to ensure a workforce that we have confidence in!!

We need programs that have the organizational competencies and capabilities to implement an educational program accountable to child readiness outcomes.

Again- professionalization of work force is critical. We need to ensure a competitive pay structure that allows qualified/skilled teachers to commit to the career and not by choosing this field create a situation where they themselves will most likely live in poverty.

Unfortunately, the old adage..."You get what you pay for" is playing out in our field.

My time is limited and there are many more people here who have things to say but let me leave you with this:

We have reached a cross roads in our society as it relates to breaking the cycle of poverty:

We can continue down the path of diminishing returns on our public investments of money and time. The statistics are scary. A high percentage of the children of Philadelphia continue to drop out of high school, which leads to incarceration, government social services dependency and more children being born funded by Medicaid. All of these outcomes perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

### **OR**

We can make the investment in our children's future by preparing them today. Remember 1800 days to prepare them for life's challenges.

I recognize there are real obstacles in the way as it relates to money but as *Frederick Douglass* said: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men". We continue to spend too much money on trying to repair our adults who were unprepared children at age 6

When it comes to money and investments, don't underfund what is needed for success so that we can feel good about ourselves in the short term.

If we don't fund dosage, continuity of care and intentionality of curriculum we will learn in 10 years that the investment did not achieve our purpose and we will have another generation of under-performing adults.

When it comes to our children's future and the challenges we face:

If not us to make the tough decisions.....then who.

If not now.... Then when .... how many more lost generations of children are we willing to accept.

If not enough money to be successful...then why spend any...we need to play to win.

Thank you for the time you allowed me today. I wish you all good luck as you embark on making a recommendation for success.

Included in the package with my testimony, I have provided some materials from presentations I have given over the year as it relates to:

Why the need for high quality early childhood education.

What is high quality early childhood education.

Is it a good return on investment of taxpayer dollars.

There are approximately 1,800 days between the day a child is born and the day they go to kindergarten. These early days of development are attributed as having the greatest impact on what can be achieved for the rest of that child's life.

### **Highly Credible Recognition on the need for high quality early childhood education:**

#### **Harvard University -Center on the Developing Child**

The achievement gap begins as early as 18 months of age – quality early education is essential to healthy brain development and is the necessary first step in a child's education. The circuits for key functions such as vision/hearing, language and higher cognitive function develop most in the first five years of live. The creation of these circuits is affected by a child's early learning environment. Bad experiences actually chew away at brain connections, while good quality experiences spur healthy development. After age five, the number of new connections slows, making it more difficult to build the necessary cognitive and social skills.

#### **PEW Foundation:**

By age five, a child's brain reaches 85% of its adult weight, developing 700 neural synapses every second—the connections that help them learn. (Source: Pew Center on States)

#### **New York Times- "The Biggest Issue", David Brooks 7-28-2008**

*By age five, it is possible to predict, with depressing accuracy, who will complete high school and college and who won't.*

**Perry Preschool Project**

As adults, children from quality early education programs are less likely to commit crimes or require public assistance; and are more likely to retain good jobs and have higher earnings.

**Corporate America: “Are They Really Ready to Work?” 2006 Study by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families**

Research confirms that quality early learning is the foundation for a strong, stable and competitive workforce. More than 85% of the foundation for communications, critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork.

**Key Insights into Early Brain Development:**

The brain of a 3-year-old is two and half times more active than an adults.

Brain development is tied to both genes and environment.

70% of what is given to us genetically is brought to fruition by our environmental experiences.

The richer the experience ... the greater number of neurological connections are created.

Experience wires the brain ... repetition strengthens the wiring.

Brain development is not an open door.

Doors open and shut so to develop the brain connections you have to take advantage of the door being open.

Door is open primarily from birth to puberty with most activity from birth to five.

Human interaction is needed to develop emotional skills.

Positive interaction fosters emotional intelligence.

Negative interaction limits emotional intelligence.

**2. School Readiness**

K-12 Test score achievement.

Special education cost reductions.

High school graduation improvement.

Employment, earnings and social services reductions.

If we change the first 5 years of low-income/at-risk children...we change the future from low probability of success to high probability of success.

**Expert Credibility in ROI:**

**James Heckman – Nobel Prize Winner – Economic: University of Chicago:**

“...A statistically significant rate of return of around 7 – 10% per annum for both girls and boys.

“If you invest in early human development...you improve education, increase health, decrease crime, achieve global competitiveness, build a stronger America”

**Perry Preschool Project – A 40 Year Study:**

Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten – Public Hearing  
September 30, 2015

Research on disadvantaged children shows that those who participate in early childhood development:

Attain higher high school graduation rates, higher lifetime salaries and higher education levels.

Pay more in taxes and have a reduced need for remediation and welfare.

Show less criminal activity.

Every \$1 invested in E.C.E has a return of \$16.14.

**Federal Reserve of Minneapolis - Art Rolnick, SVP**

Quality early education for at-risk children can produce an annual rate-of-return as high as 16%-- higher than most stock portfolios. It should be at the top of any state's economic development agenda

## **Testimony of Chris Ambrose**

Chris Ambrose  
Director  
Montgomery Early Learning Center (Infant Friendship Center)

Dear Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten,

In response to your request for public input, I am submitting the following testimony to assist with your process of producing a feasible universal pre- k plan. As someone who has worked in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field for 25 years, and in my current role as the Center Director of Montgomery Early Learning Centers' Infant Friendship Center (located at 1001 South 45th Street), I see the need for universal pre-k every day. I believe that the Commission's top priorities should focus on ensuring that all programs move towards and maintain high quality standards, early childhood teachers receiving adequate compensation, and for all early childhood education settings to be safe, engaging, stimulating and accessible to all children in the city.

Early childhood programs cannot be a one size fits all model due to Philadelphia's vast socio-economic diversity. The Commission's plan should be flexible to meet this diversity and structured so there is a variation of private pay, subsidized and fully funded care. As an example, the Infant Friendship Center is just 1.4 miles away from MELC's other West Philadelphia location, Families First. Families First provides services of which over 95% are subsidized through CCIS or fully funded by Early Head Start or Pre-K Counts. My center is comprised of a 50/50 socio-economic mix of private pay families that pay 100% of their tuition and families who receive subsidy through CCIS. This mix not only ensures that my center is serving the community's needs but the diverse population also provides a wonderful learning experience for the children and families. "I love IFC for its diversity. MELC challenges our children to do things we wouldn't even attempt at home!" are just some of the things families have said about us.

Contributions from corporations who can be incentivized through opportunities like PA's Department of Revenue Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program or as an investment should also be included in the braided funding model. According to America's Edge report "Strengthening Pennsylvania Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education," there is a 200% return on investment for funding quality early childhood education.

To ensure the Commission's plan is sustainable, I would recommend that the Commission look into the actual cost and future cost of high quality ECE. The Nonprofit Finance Fund's recent report, "Overcoming Financial Barriers to Expanding High-Quality Early Care & Education in Southeastern Pennsylvania," states that the average annual cost of high quality care is \$13,400. However, this number includes the current average salary of \$24,000 for an early childhood teacher with a four-year degree, which is less than half of the School District of

Philadelphia's entry level salary for elementary school teachers. This causes a disparity between the cost of high quality early childhood education and the compensation for its teachers. If the plan does not address wage equality, there simply will not be enough teachers to fill the classrooms.

As a summary, I appreciate the Commission's dedication and commitment to making universal pre- kindergarten in Philadelphia a sustainable reality. This is a significant step in the city's efforts to implement the recommendations from the *A Running Start Philadelphia* plan to improve school readiness. Universal pre-k will address a portion of the plan's call to provide high quality education to all children ages 0 to 5. I hope my input will be taken into consideration. To further investigate how we can fund this model, I have included Save the Children Action Network's July 2015 report on Innovative Financing for Early Childhood Education.

## **Testimony of Natalie Renew**

Natalie Renew  
Managing Director, Early Childhood Education  
Public Health Management Corporation

Dear Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten,

Thank you for convening this hearing and the opportunity to provide this testimony.

My name is Natalie Renew and I am the Managing Director of Early Childhood Education at Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC). PHMC is Pennsylvania's Public Health Institute and serves over 200,000 consumers annually via more than 250 programs. Over the past ten years, PHMC has developed expertise in early childhood education recognizing that this is critical to the health of our communities. PHMC operates several ECE programs including the Southeast Regional Key, the Philadelphia Head Start Partnership, the Fund for Quality, ChildWare and the ECE Workforce Transformation Initiative to name a few. We are committed to ensuring that all children, particularly those at-risk, have access to high quality early learning experiences.

In our role as the Southeast Regional Key (SERK), PHMC operates the Keystones STARS program on behalf of the Commonwealth in Philadelphia, Montgomery and Delaware Counties. Today I would like to share with you why this program is so critical to positive outcomes for children and needs to be intentionally included in the City's universal prekindergarten service strategy. Keystone STARS was created over 12 years ago in response to federal mandates to set aside Child Care and Development Block Grant funds for quality improvement. The SERK reviews and designates programs at a quality level of STAR 1 through 4, provides grants to support program improvements, and facilitates training and technical assistance services to support increasing the quality of care for our youngest learners. Included in my written testimony is a full description of the services offered to the 750 STARS sites in Philadelphia.

Keystone STARS has a set of performance standards that are based on national best practices for young children and include: staff and director qualifications and training requirements; curricula and learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and guided by the PA Early Learning Standards; intentional connections to families and communities; and effective administration and management. These standards are based on national accreditation criteria and cross walked with federal initiatives including Head Start.

Research shows that high quality early care and education programs are shown to improve outcomes for young children including readiness for kindergarten, on-grade reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, reduced grade repetition, reduced drop out, on-time graduation and a plethora of positive long term outcomes beyond that. At-risk children and families stand to gain the most from high quality prekindergarten services. In Philadelphia there are currently 1,885 licensed family, group, and center providers and 758 are participating in Keystone STARS. Only 186 of these programs are

operating at our highest quality levels of STAR 3 and 4. The City and its early learning stakeholders, as articulated in *A Running Start Philadelphia*, have taken a clear stand that we must do more to ensure that all children receive services in high quality settings. As you will hear from others today, high quality services are costly and we must commit to fully funding the cost of care or risk continuing trends of low quality services to our most at-risk families.

As you consider the information presented today, the data you will gather, and the other inputs you will receive, I want to emphasize the importance of Keystone STARS as a policy making tool. Philadelphia has been a leader in using STARS rating to make key decisions and align local initiatives with statewide priorities. For several years now, the School District of Philadelphia has led the way in requiring that its contracted partners participate at STAR 3 and 4 thus ensuring quality of environments, best educational practices and management capacity. Others have followed suite and many funding opportunities are only available to STAR 3 and 4 providers. This decision has accelerated movement to STAR 3 and 4 and in turn has improved services to young children. I would recommend that the City's universal pre-k strategy continue this approach and direct resources to providers with a track record of providing high quality services.

Given constraints in funding many believe that we need to consolidate funding to the highest quality providers where we are assured the best outcomes for children. This is a responsible strategy that doesn't leave others behind. There are significant state and local resources to support providers that want to demonstrate high quality operations and participate in pre-k and high quality initiatives. The SERK and its expert partners provide \$1.5 million of training and technical assistance to providers in our region each year; these services include coursework from institutions of higher education and on-site assistance to meet the Keystone STARS performance standards. Furthermore, over \$2 million is provided in grants to STAR 1 and 2 providers each year to support their efforts to move up to STAR 3 and 4. The Commonwealth also maintains a tuition assistance program providing scholarships of up to \$6,000 per person pursuing credentialing to advance in Keystone STARS. And lastly, we are fortunate to have local investments in the United Way's Success By 6 program that provides intensive training, technical assistance and peer support to advance STAR 2 providers to STAR 3. While the path to STAR 3 and 4 requires significant investment, buy-in, and organizational change, for providers that are committed to high quality services and positive outcomes for children, there is an array of support.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your leadership in making universal pre-k a reality for our City. I hope you will consider intentionally including Keystone STARS in your policy making on this important issue.

## Testimony of Mary Graham

Mary Graham  
Executive Director  
Children's Village

Good afternoon and thank you. My name is Mary Graham, Executive Director at Children's Village, located in center city. As a professional in the field for 40 years, I cannot overstate that the single most important aspect of delivering quality universal PreK is FUNDING.

In Pennsylvania, we fund early childhood education in a number of ways. We have Child Care Works, a program for the working poor; Head Start and PA PreK Counts. Let's look at how much each of these programs funds education for young children.

As a NAEYC Accredited, Keystone Star 4 program, the highest rated possible, we are reimbursed \$9,490 for a preschooler. Children typically attend 10 hours a day, 260 days a year. That comes to \$3.65 an hour. For Head Start, funding is \$6,800 a year. These programs operate 6 hours a day, 180 days a year. That reimbursement rate comes to \$6.30 an hour. PA PreK Counts provides \$8,000 a year. Children are in PreK programs 5 hours a day, 180 days a year. That reimbursement rate: \$8.89 an hour. As a center director who has the majority of children funded under Child Care Works, the lowest reimbursement, I would love \$8.89 an hour. But really, that amount just is not enough to fund **HIGH QUALITY** care.

Look around the city, can you find a parking lot where you can park a car for \$8.89 an hour? Not likely. Yet highly qualified educators are expected to provide the best possible learning experience to a child for \$8.89 an hour. At this rate we are expected to hire a state certified teacher (who must meet the same standards as teachers in public schools). With 20 children in a classroom, the second teacher must have a minimum of an Associates degree in ECE. These teachers deserve health benefits. In fact, under the Affordable Care Act, many providers are required to offer health benefits.

To offer PreK Counts programs, providers must earn a Star 3 or 4 rating. This means the center achieved higher standards across the areas in environment, materials and staff qualifications.

What about family engagement? Children who are supported by their families do better in school; Agencies must provide workshops, volunteer opportunities and other supports for families. Who does this at the agency? Not just the teacher, but also an array of staff, whether it is a social worker, family services staff, director or assistant director. Their wages also come out of that \$8.89 an hour.

Nutrition? Healthier foods lead to better health. Children need to be healthy so they can learn. Again, healthy meals/snacks come out of that same \$8.89.

Children at risk? These include those from families who are low income, non-English speaking or those with special needs. At our center, we have translators and interpreters plus a Child Development Psychologist. Again, that \$8.89 is supposed to pay for these critical supports.

The list goes on, I won't spend time addressing how underpaid teachers are. As the work of this commission continues, we **MUST** first look at funding. We cannot do this on the cheap. And in our enthusiasm to provide this opportunity to as many children as possible, **let's not sacrifice quality for quantity.**

## **Testimony of Cheryl Feldman**

(Delivered by Makeeda Holley)

Cheryl Feldman  
Executive Director  
District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund

The District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, a labor management partnership of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees AFSCME and more than fifty Delaware Valley employers, applauds the City of Philadelphia in its goal of ensuring that every three and four- year old in Philadelphia has access to high-quality, affordable, and accessible educational services.

The 1199C Training Fund works tirelessly to support the efforts of over 5,000 Philadelphians annually, many of whom have struggled in gaining access to a quality education that meets their educational, social, and emotional needs. We serve out of school and out of work youth, unemployed adults, and low-wage workers who seek our services to gain the academic and essential workforce skills that will qualify them for a GED, post-secondary education, and family sustaining employment opportunities. Our experience in serving the wonderful residents of Philadelphia convinces us that quality Universal Pre-Kindergarten is an important part of the solution to fighting poverty, ensuring that the children of Philadelphia get a good start in their educational experience and thereby significantly reducing the number of vulnerable, educationally and economically disadvantaged Philadelphians.

We applaud the efforts of this Commission, the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC), and the many other child advocates that are organizing to make quality Universal Pre-Kindergarten a reality in Philadelphia. We have learned in the healthcare

industry that quality care requires that employers have access to a quality, trained and educated workforce. Implementation of Pre-Kindergarten demands that more attention be paid to creating a skilled childcare workforce, with opportunities for career growth and advancement in the early childhood education and related human services/education sectors, and a livable wage.

Childcare and early childhood education workers, from entry-level employment through managerial roles, will need opportunities to quickly upgrade skills, obtain credentials that attest to competency attainment, and have access to college credit and degree programs. Likewise, as these workers gain new skills and credentials, their employers must offer competitive wage steps that will ensure employee retention and the resulting consistency of care that Philadelphia's children need.

The 1199C Training Fund is working with DVAEYC to design a Registered Apprenticeship that will help address the mutual workforce needs of employers and childcare providers by creating a streamlined career path that includes classroom and on the job training linked to credentials and college credits. Employers and workforce policymakers increasingly recognize Registered Apprenticeship as a valid and valuable low-cost/high-return training strategy. The 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund and its employer partners are deeply engaged in the White House- led national push to expand the number of Apprenticeship programs in non-traditional industries, and we are now working with child care partners to create this opportunity in alignment with the Commission's efforts to implement Universal Pre-Kindergarten. We look forward to working with childcare employer partners and post-secondary collegiate partners to create a Childcare Registered Apprenticeship Program that will help ensure the delivery of *high-quality* childcare provided by a *highly trained, professional* workforce.

## **Testimony of Amy Friedlander**

Amy Friedlander  
Early Childhood Educations Workforce Transformation Initiative

Dear Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten,

I am writing to you on behalf of three non-profit organizations that were recently funded by the William Penn Foundation to describe Philadelphia's Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce and to propose how this workforce might better meet the needs of Philadelphia's children and families. Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC), Montgomery Early Learning Centers (MELC), and Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) are partners in this project, which is called the ECE Workforce Transformation Initiative.

There are two salient and perhaps non-coincidental facts related to the ECE workforce nationally and locally: it is predominately female and it is woefully underpaid. While there are some differences in compensation based on the type of program setting (family vs. center), the type of public funding source (Head Start, child care subsidy, pre-k), and the credentials (AA, BA, teaching certificate) of the teacher, in Philadelphia ECE teachers typically earn approximately half of what kindergarten teachers earn. Looking across sectors, ECE teachers earn what janitors and parking lot attendants earn.

And often, because the ECE sector is not scaled, teachers work for small businesses or small to medium size nonprofits, and receive minimal to no benefits. This compensation package leads to financial insecurity and stress for teachers. Nationally half of ECE staff are so poor that they rely on some type of public benefits. While we expect that our ECE teachers to implement curriculum, assess students, and partner with families in order to ensure that children register for and arrive academically and social prepared for kindergarten, teachers are, in fact, worrying about how to feed their own families.

Poor compensation and high financial stress lead to turnover rates among ECE teachers of approximately 30%. Generally speaking, programs serving children from lower income households experience higher turnover than centers earning private pay. Consistent staff lead to positive child outcomes, yet industry-wide low salaries ensure that turnover is high and continuity is low. For this reason, research has shown that ECE teacher compensation is a legitimate proxy for quality.

While Philadelphia has many innovative ECE quality initiatives, professional development and credit bearing programs for current ECE teachers, and high school and other pipeline programs designed to attract new teachers to the field, unless these programs are paired with wage and compensation changes, quality will remain elusive. Only 15% of providers in Philadelphia currently provide high quality care. The inability to attract and retain qualified staff is the biggest inhibitor to quality ECE, including Pre-K expansion, in our region.

To create an achievable and sustainable system for universal pre-kindergarten, the Commission must tackle ECE teacher compensation. And to do so, the Commission must tackle pre-kindergarten rates of care. Rates must be high enough to sustain a livable wage for teaching staff and to allow ECE providers to successfully compete with the District in terms of wages and benefits for highly credentialed staff. This will put unmanageable financial pressure on families that currently pay the full cost of care. These opposing pressures necessitate a system of early education that is heavily subsidized for all families, is efficiently regulated to provide high quality, and is effectively monitored to ensure compliance with minimum teacher salary and benefit requirements.

Thank you.

## **Testimony of Jerry Jordan**

(delivered by George Jackson)

Jerry Jordan  
President  
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

I want to thank the City of Philadelphia for convening today’s hearing on this critically important issue. There is a very good reason that Philadelphia voters overwhelmingly voted for the creating of the Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten:

As we examine all of the challenges facing Philadelphia’s schoolchildren, it is crucial that we pay particular attention to the development of our youngest children.

There is ample research showing just how important it is for children to have access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs. Children who don’t enroll in pre-k enter school as much as two years behind their peers who have access to early childhood programs.

A lack of quality early childhood education programs has a tremendous negative impact on children from the poorest families. In a city where the poverty rate is over 26 percent, we are seeing a growing number of children who are starting their academic careers at a tremendous disadvantage.

To be competitive in a global economy, our children need to receive the best education possible. By limiting their access to pre-k programs, we are shortchanging our students before they arrive for their first day of kindergarten.

Despite the countless studies showing the impact of pre-k on reading development, our District has drastically cut pre-k year after year.

Now, we find ourselves the midst of “Read by 4<sup>th</sup>!”, a massive effort to have children reading on grade level by 4th grade. The cuts in pre-k have resulted in a reading level crisis.

The true shame of this is that it did not have to be this way. Philadelphia’s pre-k system is a shell of what it once was.

For years, Bright Futures and Head Start programs run in Public schools were in high demand in every corner of the city.

Programs that had waiting lists, and that should have been expanded, were instead cut by the District.

In 2013, the District made the ill-fated decision to outsource Headstart services, despite the spotty track record of private child care providers implementing the school district’s early childhood education curriculum.

While the PFT is grateful that this Commission has been formed, it's unfortunate to see that Philadelphia has regressed from nationally lauded early childhood education program taught by certified, highly qualified instructors to what can be called a pre-K "state of emergency."

Keep in mind that the cuts to Headstart were facilitated, not by a lack of resources, but fiscal mismanagement of Title I funds. Once again, our children are paying the price for poor fiscal management.

The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers wants to be a full partner in moving forward with a Universal Pre-K agenda. Educators need to play a major role in the design and implementation of an early childhood education system.

The current literacy crisis in our schools shows us that any pre-k programs need to be administered by certified early childhood educators, not private contractors.

I hope that today marks a fresh start in the way we approach the education of our youngest children. I look forward to many more conversations as we look to bring a first-class pre-k program back to Philadelphia.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

## **Testimony of Cherie Crosby**

Cherie Crosby  
Manor College

Title: A Cure to the Crimes We Have Committed

Collectively in the state of Pennsylvania we have committed a great crime against the children of Philadelphia. Each year, thousands of children do not attend high-quality preschool experiences. This is often to the lack of available high-quality programs, and the cost parents must endure to ensure that their children received the best foundation. The years before age five are critical and if we do not ensure that all children in Philadelphia have access to free, high-quality preschool programming we are giving them a life sentence to poverty, illiteracy or prison. The children of Philadelphia are paying for a crime they did not commit. As an educator who has dedicated her life to serving the early childhood community I have seen Pennsylvania make strides in the right direction but there is still much that needs to be done.

As a professor, I have watched many students enter college ill-prepared for college-level work often needing remedial education for reading, writing, and mathematics. All three of these subjects have their roots in the preschool years. The preschool years lay the foundation for future success and help children develop into adults who have well-developed critical thinking skills, can read well and so much more.

It's time that Pennsylvania right the crimes they have committed against children and give every child in Philadelphia access to free, high-quality preschool programming through adopting, supporting fully, and implementing Universal Pre-K. By doing so, we can serve as a model and lead the way for Universal Pre-K to become a reality for all children in Pennsylvania.

Now ask yourself which is cheaper: educating a child or sending them to a life of poverty and prison? Please choose wisely!

## Testimony of Rachel Honore

Rachel Honore  
Parent Navigator, Action for Early Learning  
People's Emergency Center

Good Afternoon,

What is LIFE? LIFE =LEARNING, For they are inextricably intertwined. For Faith Based Believers the Bible States “Raise A Child in the Way that He or She Should Go and When He is Old He will not depart from It” For Science based believers SIR ISAAC Newton In the Laws of Motion and in particular, **the law of inertia** states An object at rest stays at rest and an object in **motion** stays in **motion** with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. How does this relate to Universal Pre K? Universal Pre K gets that body in motion! Universal Pre K is the difference in a child existing vs. a child living? You are planting the seeds early for a wonderful harvest.

I am a Parent Navigator with the West Philadelphia Action for Early Learning Initiative. I am also the mother of a 3-year-old boy with autism.

AFEL is a Drexel University-led collaboration of social service and education agencies and community stakeholders working to create an education support system for students and families in the West Philadelphia Promise Zone. The Initiative aims to build awareness around the importance of early childhood education while strengthening the capacity of child care centers and more effectively linking Head Starts and Pre-Ks to local Kindergartens. Drexel has partnered with People's Emergency Center to provide community outreach and parent engagement around the importance of quality early childhood education.

Universal Pre-K is great, but it's not enough! **ENOUGH IS**

Philadelphia's children must have access to high quality Pre-K. **ENOUGH IS** Teachers must have equitable pay, opportunities for professional development, especially around understanding children's social and emotional needs

Parents must understand the importance of quality ECE as well as an understanding of developmental milestones.

The statistics are as follows

The majority of childcare centers in AFEL's target area are low quality – about 65%; and within those low quality centers the majority of the children come from the community, which is, – about 90%. While the few high quality centers have the majority of children from outside the neighborhood!

Additionally, about 22% of neighborhood children are not enrolled in any early childhood program. This lack of access to quality Pre-K for low-income children needs to be reversed!

Low-quality centers are challenged by:

Lack of educational resources

Staff with low education levels

High turn-over among staff and administration

Directors who struggle with STAR-required paperwork

Lack of time/resources for administrative staff and instructors to participate in professional development.

The Pre-K Commission has an opportunity to support all of Philadelphia's children by addressing these additional important factors.

Finally I would like to leave you with this thought that is adapted from a principle in Macro Economics which has to do with Investment and Yield returns, I will do my best to put my spin on it. A big and wise investment yields a great return that pays in dividends for years to come. Poor investment yields negative, little or poor return. If you invest in our children I guarantee you will see a return, as a matter of fact I double dare you to invest in our city's children who are our treasure for they are our future. Thank you.

## **Testimony of Shawn Towey**

Shawn Towey  
Early Childhood Policy Coordinator  
Public Citizens for Children and Youth

Thank you for your work on this important commission, and for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Public Citizens for Children and Youth about how our city can give every child a great start through early childhood education. I will focus my remarks on estimating the cost of moving all participating preschoolers into high quality early childhood education. Although early childhood education is not cheap, this is an attainable goal, something we can accomplish in the next few years with smart planning and use of City dollars to fill gaps not covered by other current funding streams.

Currently we estimate that about 14,000 preschool-age children are enrolled in care in a child care program that is unlikely to maximize their potential during this period of extraordinary brain growth, and may not give them the skills they need to be ready for kindergarten. The majority of these children are low-income, and research shows that they start school a year to 18 months behind their more affluent peers in cognitive and social/emotional development. This is the group we are most concerned with.

I will explain how I get this target figure. Based on experiences elsewhere, we estimate that even if the city offers pre-k to all 3- and 4-year olds, at least one in five families will elect not to send them to preschool. About 41 percent of this age group are already enrolled in a high-quality setting. That leaves about 14,000 children – 36 percent -- who are enrolled in childcare that is NOT considered high quality.

Some quick math on the cost: assuming we have the capacity for enough high quality slots for these children, the current PKC reimbursement rate of \$8,500 per child for all 14,000 children comes to \$120 million. The true cost for year-round, full day care is actually higher, as others will explain today. However, even if this amount were available currently, we do not currently have the workforce or physical capacity to educate all these young children in a high-quality setting. Thus, I encourage the Commission to think about how we can roll out a sustainable plan that weaves together system-wide improvements that build our workforce and physical capacity, over the course of a few years.

An overall policy goal of the Commission should be to convert the use of public funds from child care of unknown quality to child care of high quality., and some operating funds are already available. About 11,000 preschoolers are currently in care outside the home that is considered low or unknown quality – and their parents are paying for this child care with federal/state child care subsidy. Approximately \$226 million per year in federal/state

subsidy funds is currently flowing to providers in the city. This may offset as much as half the \$120 million cost, reducing it to approximately \$60 million.

Of course, there are many unknown variables in this equation, some of which OCDEL should be able to model. A factor over which we have limited control is that parents have the final say in where they choose to use their subsidy, so reaching out to and educating parents about the importance of quality pre-k is a crucial. And pre-k dollars cannot replace child care dollars; in many cases parents would still require at least a partial subsidy for additional early morning or afternoon hours – or for those who work non-standard schedules, a full subsidy to cover evening and weekend hours.

Also unknown is the extent to which Federal and state governments will increase funds for preschool, or how much of the new funds would flow to Philadelphia. In the past four years, Philadelphia did not benefit proportionately from the 15% increase in PA Pre-K Counts.

In sum, we encourage the Commission to take the following actions in pursuit of a plan to accomplish universal preschool:

1. Consider how building up supply factors including a high-quality workforce and appropriate facilities, can be staged together over the course of three or four years.
2. With state and federal funds in place, a stepped-up approach from the city that invests an additional \$20 million per year over three years could help us reach universal enrollment in high quality seats for every child whose parents desire it.
3. Consult with experts on the true cost of quality care so that programs can be reimbursed in a fair and sustainable way.
4. Support policies that reach out to families and that encourage parental choices around quality, so that the city can convert as much as possible of federal/state subsidies to higher quality programs with better outcomes for children.
5. Provide alternatives, such as the home visiting-based HIPPIY program just beginning now in South Philadelphia, for families that opt out of preschool.
6. Finally, the evidence shows that young children benefit from mixed-income, inclusive classrooms. Let pre-k be a model for public schooling of uniform excellence in a diverse city. We should look to New York, and even to European countries where universal pre-k has been the norm for generations, as a model for building public buy-in and willingness to support early education via taxes.

## Testimony of Quibila A. Divine

Quibila A. Divine  
Citizens Consulting Group

Good evening. My name is Quibila A. Divine and I am speaking as a long time community activist and Executive Member of the 11th Ward. I am not representing my employer, nor any of our clients. By way of background, I live in North Philadelphia by choice. Before I left for college, my grandfather told me, "Don't get so smart that you forget what you got smart to do."

While I agree that providing quality Pre-K to ALL children, regardless of race, income, class, and language...is a good thing, I must question the motives. In June, Philadelphia launched A Running Start. According to its website, it is a "crucial component of Shared Prosperity Philadelphia, the city's comprehensive, anti-poverty strategy..." One of its goals is to ensure that "all infants, toddlers and preschoolers have the opportunity to experience high-quality, full day early learning in formal and informal settings." The first strategy used to accomplish this is to "advocate that ALL programs receiving public funds be required to participate in Keystone STARS..."

Where I live, there are a combination of certified, uncertified, family-focused, center-focused, STAR rated, and non-STAR rated centers. The one thing that each of these centers has in common is that they provide early child care service to many low income families, who, without it, would not be able to go to their low wage paying jobs. Another thing about families in my neighborhood is that once their young scholars are transitioned into kindergarten, despite the quality rating of the Pre-K they attend, most children attend the same chronically failing, neighborhood school that their parents attended. Thus, the reason for my questioning of the motive behind Universal Pre-K...but, why stop here? Allow me to ask a few more questions...

- What good is it to spend time, money and other resources on ensuring that all students are enrolled in Pre-K when the same attention is not being paid to students once they reach kindergarten and progress through to 12th grade?
- According to A Running Start, fewer than half of the district's 3rd grade students score at proficient or advanced in reading and math. What percentage of Philadelphia's low income children, who attended a high quality Pre-K, are proficient in reading and math by the time they reach third grade?
- Is it possible to determine in which schools we see the greatest successes?
- What instructional methods are these successful schools using to provide high quality education?
- How do we take these models to scale and ensure academic success for ALL K-12 children, universally?

Upon reading the plan for A Running Start, I learned that 63% of Philadelphia's children under 6 live in poverty; 45% of children under 5 years of age are African American and of the 68,000 early child care slots, only 21% provide high quality care (STAR 3 or4). Therefore, it is clear to me that Universal Pre-K will primarily target poor, Black children,

their families and the child care providers that serve them because some of the goals and strategies in A Running Start have unintended consequences:

- Goal 1/Strategy 1: A little more than one-third of Philadelphia’s child care providers, who currently receive public funds but do not currently participate in STARS will be knocked out of the competition, their low wage earning workers will be unemployed and as a result, the children of these workers will no longer qualify for a child care subsidy.
- Goal 1/Strategy 2: Low income families currently in the system will not see a need for “local agencies to work together to determine eligibility” and are unlikely to complete a universal application, thus missing the opportunity.
- Goal 2/Strategy 6: Aligning and expanding funding for high quality learning opportunities totally exclude 34% of Philadelphia’s centers that are not currently in STARS. What type of funding and technical assistance will be made available to these providers?
- Goal 4/Strategy 11: How many teachers, within the same chronically failing elementary school, communicate regularly about improving the academic performance of and raising expectations for their students? Is it realistic to expect these teachers to attend combined coaching, planning and training with Pre-K staff they do not know?

As stated in the beginning, I agree that ALL of Philadelphia’s children need equal access to high quality education...at all levels. There are too many questions that need to be answered about how the children, families and providers in neighborhoods like mine will be impacted, informed and included in the plan for A Running Start and Universal Pre-K.

In the words of my grandfather, “What did you get smart to do?” Did you get smart to serve Philadelphia’s poor families? If so, will you allow decisions to be made about them, without them?

## **Testimony of Heather Davis Jones**

Heather Davis Jones  
FACTS Charter

My daughter is a Pre-K Counts student. She also has an IEP. She attends school for the full day from 8:30 am until 3:30 pm. Her program was cancelled last year because of funding issues. According to the school, one of those issues is that it is difficult to find a Pre-K Counts certified teacher because Pre-K teachers with advanced degrees are generally paid far less than their K-12 peers. The school also said their reimbursements at \$8,500 were inadequate because they spent almost double that amount per child.

I strongly believe, and the research shows, if Pennsylvania wants to increase the number of high school graduates and facilitate a life-long love of learning, we should use Oklahoma as an example. All pre-K teachers should have a college degree and a certificate in early-childhood education, and should be paid the same wage as K-12 teachers. Teachers certified in early education can recognize the disabilities that tend to emerge at a young age, and can understand the best ways to handle behavior problems. The student-teacher ratio should be at least 10-1, and class sizes limited to 20. Teachers should also be supplemented by special services.

My daughter's previous school had an occupational and speech therapist on staff. When she started pre-school, she didn't speak after a year and a half of speech therapy with an itinerate therapist. Because her therapists were on staff at her preschool, they were able to see her throughout the day, and I could easily meet with them. After one year with an on staff therapist, she greatly improved.

I suggest we follow Oklahoma's lead, making Universal Pre-K available to all Pennsylvania residents free of charge on a voluntary basis, while partnering with private providers, Head Start and Pre-K Counts. Currently to qualify for Pre-k Counts households must be at or below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Partnering with outside entities would allow programs to be housed in a variety of settings, including tribal programs, churches, and assisted-living facilities.

Additionally, States with a dedicated funding stream have fared the best for pre-school. Including pre-K initiatives in the statewide school funding formula for K-12 education is a particularly effective way of providing consistently adequate funding.

I also suggest that we avoid using sin taxes as a funding source. These taxes are used to discourage the "sin" and therefore are not a stable funding source. For example, California, at one point, used the same tobacco sin taxes to fund marketing campaigns against smoking as it did to fund preschool. Oklahoma has married private and public funding. I suggest we look to private funders for philanthropic giving in addition to general tax revenue. An

example of such a partnership is Tulsa’s Community Action Project (CAP), which has created and runs McClure Early--- Childhood Center in Tulsa as well as 13 other early-education facilities. CAP is described by writer, Sharon Lerner, as a “sort of turbo---charged Head Start provider”. CAP has annual budget of more than \$52 million and uses both private money—primarily from local oilman and philanthropist George Kaiser—with state and federal funds to serve young children. Also Oklahoma built the cost of pre---k into the larger public---school funding formula, rather than funding early education separately in the state budget which protects pre-K from fiscal conservatives who might object to it as part of a “nanny state.” Thank you.

## **Testimony of Suzann Morris**

Suzann Morris  
DVAEYC

Thank you to the Universal Pre-K Commission for allowing me to share my perspective. In my professional role at the Delaware Valley AEYC, I live and breathe by the many positive far-reaching societal benefits that result from expanded access to quality pre-k. But today I come before you as a parent working to be a part of Philadelphia's bright future. Like most parents, my 2-year-old son is the center of my world. But through my early learning experience, and considering my options for growing our family's future in Philadelphia, it's becoming increasingly apparent that my son, along with thousands of other children in Philadelphia, are not the center of anyone's attention when it comes to our city's early learning system.

That sentiment comes with a story. A few weeks ago, I began reaching out to parents in my social network to send in their thoughts on pre-k for this hearing. The response was shockingly underwhelming. Several parents confessed that while they support universal pre-k, they were skeptical it would help all families, including those with incomes too high for child care subsidy or Pre-K Counts, or be as far reaching as New York's recent expansion. And after their own journeys of finding pre-k for their children, some said they're burnt out.

I know what they mean. The current system we have challenges even the most savvy and well-resourced parents. As parents, we know with absolute certainty that learning begins at birth, and the formative first year is perhaps the most critical one for healthful brain development. Yet parents of all income levels are left scrambling for care of our youngest children, as a shortage of quality infant settings means wait lists stretch more than year. The infant care challenge creates a baseline of panic around quality early learning that does not abate for families as their children age.

The specifics of what happens in toddler and pre-k programs are a mystery. Local families are offered few resources to explain what they really want to know about programs. Curriculums, wait lists, costs, and staff qualifications are often buried beneath a network unearthed only through word-of-mouth research and site visits. Things that really matter to parents – how long teachers' have been at a program, the quality of staff interaction with the children, the diversity of staff and students – don't scale into our current quality rating system in a way that is transparent. It's left up to parents to observe for themselves what "feels" right for their child while trying to maintain a professional and personal schedule. It's no wonder that once a family has landed a program that fits, they've exhausted their capacity to engage.

To add, we know the city is in dire straits for affordable quality pre-k programs. Quality pre-k program, like the one my child is enrolled in, comes at cost. Which it should. We know quality costs money and that our children -- all children -- are worth it. But the cost being shouldered by low and middle income families is too high to bear. Our son's care costs 14% of our family's gross yearly income or a little more than \$17,000 a year -- for four days a week. When he reaches pre-k next year, our cost will decrease -- to just under \$16,000 a year. Add in other typical household costs and even with two middle income working parents, we're left with no room for college savings, investments in our home, or a second child. And should my heart win out over reason and we do expand our family, the temptation to move to a surrounding county with more affordable quality care options will go from a boring option to a heartbreaking must for us.

But I, and thousands of families like mine, are not giving up that easily. And I am pretty certain that our city's leaders are not eager to lose us either. Instead, I will advocate for a pre-k plan that is inclusive of all families -- a plan with a streamlined and easy to comprehend system of entry; that pushes for early learning settings that are rich in authentic diversity, and eschew economic and social segregation; that implement curriculums that honor children as exploratory, playful learners and not testing machines; and, if possible, that shaves a small percentage off the price tag for middle income, working families like mine. Because by investing in all children, and their foundational years, the city is not only investing in our city's future, but investing in all families too. So in considering what kind of city we want, please consider a broad definition of inclusion so that all children can get the right start -- together.

## **Testimony of Ellen Ramage**

Ellen Ramage  
Case Manager  
Refugee Employment and Advanced Program

My name is Ellen Ramage and I am a case manager in the Refugee Employment and Advancement Program at Nationalities Service Center. NSC resettles approximately 400 refugees a year and my program services 150 refugees, asylees, and victims of human trafficking. While my team is devoted to finding our clients stable jobs in the Philadelphia area, one of my roles is to connect our clients to affordable daycare options so that they are more available to work.

I am thankful for this opportunity to speak with you all today because I feel it is important that the city understands the barriers my clients face to finding employment. Universal Pre-K that lasts all day and all year could, for many of our clients, mean the difference between accepting employment and boosting their income or continuing to live at the poverty line. As many of you may know, entry level jobs in Philadelphia either start very early in the morning or end late in the evening. While these shifts do not necessarily correspond with a typical school day, having a safe and educational place for one's children during the day means that one parent could work the first shift and another could work the second without worrying about whether their commutes would overlap. This is why it is crucial that pre-K be offered in both the morning and afternoon. Parents will probably both be in transit to and from work between approximately 1 and 3 pm.

As it is now, many of my families do not qualify for CCIS and were not granted a space in the Head Start or Bright Futures programs. This places an overwhelming burden on women which delays employment and the generation of income to support their children because they have to be around during the day to care for their families. If they had access to childcare that lasted all day and throughout the year, they would be able to accept a job without fear of their children's schedules changing with the seasons. At the very least, it allows the parents to go to their appointments with doctors, case managers, and other providers without worrying about entertaining their children or sacrificing confidentiality because their children are present.

Not only would full day/full year preschool be beneficial for our parents, it is certainly an investment in our children as well. Young people impacted by trauma need stability, consistency, and caring, mentoring relationships with adults to help them grow into healthy, productive individuals. By providing a consistent routine of attending school, children develop resiliency and attributes to be more successful in life. To arbitrarily end what could be the only consistent thing in a child's life merely because tradition dictates that school finishes in June could be retriggering for many of my client's children and could impact their ability to trust or learn in the future. My client's children are also in the process of learning English and adapting

to American culture so that they can succeed in kindergarten. They need all the time they can get to be ready to learn with their peers.

I understand that funding for a longer school year may be difficult to obtain, but I do not think that it is difficult to justify. During my time as a case manager at NSC, overwhelmingly the biggest desires my clients have expressed have been their urge to get a job and their wish that their children could attend school, as soon and for as long as possible. By making Pre-K a full day, all year program, we can meet both of these needs and create sustainable, self-sufficient households.

## **Testimony of William Capers**

William Capers  
President  
Olde City Day School

My name is William Capers. I am President and CEO of Olde City Day School. We currently have 3 locations in the Philadelphia area and we service nearly 200 kids on a daily basis. Thank you for the opportunity to speak concerning Universal Pre-k here in Philadelphia.

I have been in childcare since 2005 originally serving the Montgomery and Chester County population. The reason I pursued operations in Philadelphia was because after being invited to help a friend with a childcare search in the city, I saw the disparity in childcare between the suburban areas versus the city, and I was greatly disturbed. There are some very good, well-operated childcare facilities in the city however there are others. I wanted to bring the same quality and standards mandatory in the suburbs to the city.

After starting Olde City Day School in 2009 I quickly understood partly why the disparity existed. People loved my program and we began to grow rapidly. After only a year in business I decided it was time to expand operations. I opened my next location in Germantown. I wanted to serve more of the minority population and help more children receive the solid foundation Olde City Day School offered further prepare them for the educational challenges that were ahead. But after a short time I began to hear that cost was a factor and people either began to drop from the program or opt not to enroll at all.

I did a market analysis and saw that my prices were comparable to centers of the same quality in other areas however people simply could not afford it. It is a struggle to maintain quality staff and programming while enrollment numbers dwindle because the majority of people I am trying to serve within the community opt to attend programs with lessor quality simply based on a free or reduced cost.

Providing universal pre-k here in Philadelphia would level the playing field which would allow quality programs like mine and others the opportunity to capture and educate a market that otherwise continues to fall through the cracks.

## Testimony of Karel Kilimnik

Karel Kilimnik  
Co-Founder  
Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools

Good afternoon everyone. I am Karel Kilimnik, lifelong Early Childhood Educator, retired kindergarten teacher, member of the PFT, and co-founder of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools (APPS). I attended Philadelphia School District schools from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I received an excellent education and work diligently to insure that every child in this district can do the same.

First, I want to thank City Council for not only providing funds for the district but insisting that some money will be withheld until the district stops outsourcing services. Members of our organization (APPS) attend every SRC meeting and let me say that it is about time the district is held accountable for how they choose to spend money.

There should have been universal prekindergarten years ago. Presently monies are flowing from the federal government and hopefully soon from the state. It is this flood of money and how it will be used that concerns me. Let me start with an example of the outsourcing of early childhood programs from the district. In 2013 Dr. Hite proclaimed that the district would be outsourcing 2,000 Head Start slots. This announcement came on the heels of his plan to shutter over 20 schools and was buried. Some valiant parents and Head Start staff appeared at SRC meetings to plead for their centers but were unsuccessful.

<http://thenotebook.org/blog/135781/district-outlines-plan-to-outsource-more-head-start-seats>

The reasoning given for this privatization is cost...certified teachers cost too much. District Head Start teachers are certified, members of the PFT who receive benefits and participated (when it existed) in the steps system negotiated in the union contract. Certified teachers possess at least a bachelor's in Early Childhood Education, many have Master's degrees. There is stability within their ranks. Stability allows for the development of relationships between staff, students, and families. Stable relationships help young children flourish.

The requirements for receiving these outsourced slots is for a program to hold either a 3 or 4 Keystone Star rating. When these slots were outsourced some receiving centers were rated a 1 or 2. Aspira, who owes the district over \$3 million dollars, wound up with 200 more slots as did a private chain of daycare centers. I want to know who is providing the oversight for the monitoring of these 2,000 slots. We already know that the district is having enormous problems with charter school oversight so who is ensuring that these young children are in developmentally appropriate settings with certified teachers?

Out of 17 people on this Universal Pre K commission I see no Early Childhood teachers. Their voices need to be heard. I sincerely hope that the 17 commissioners are aware that many will want a part of the money flowing into the city for Universal Pre K; many will have their hands out to grab a handful of coins.

Please be aware of the disaster created by the district in outsourcing substitute teacher services to a private agency with no practical knowledge of the situation. Where are the Early Childhood voices that have the educational background as well as the years of experience to understand the complexities and nuances of caring for and educating our youngest children? Where are the voices that will push for developmentally appropriate practice? Where are the voices to hold the monitors accountable for doing their job? I ask that you think about these questions and act to ensure all Universal Pre K programs are programs you would want your young child attending.

One more question –5 people were appointed by City Council and 5 by the Mayor – who appointed the other 7 to this commission?