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**PA BUDGET ACKNOWLEDGES “CHILD CARE WORKS” FOR PA WORKING FAMILIES
ENTHUSIASM TEMPERED BY UNDERPINNING \$36 MILLION
IN STATE FUND CUTS TO CHILD CARE LINE ITEMS**

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA – The FY 2019-20 budget agreement allocated \$27 million in new federal resources to expand subsidized child care in Pennsylvania and invest in quality improvements to the system. Start Strong PA stands with state policymakers in its firm belief that this is an example of a budget that “funds what works” and helps “put Pennsylvanians to work”.

However, these federal gains in the child care line items were offset by a \$36 million reduction in state funding which was replaced with federal dollars. These slashed investments could have further promoted access to quality in the state’s child care system. Start Strong PA estimates that an additional 2,400 of the nearly 95,000 eligible unserved infants and toddlers could have been served in high-quality programs had the state maintained its commitment to the Commonwealth’s youngest learners.

The principal partners of Start Strong PA issued the following statement regarding the state budget:

In a state where 70 percent of children under the age of six have working parents, affordable, high-quality child care is a necessity for parents to attend work with the confidence that their children are safe, thriving, and learning.

We are thrilled to see state policymakers utilize \$27 million in federal resources to expand access to high-quality child care. These investments will serve 970 infants and toddlers currently on the subsidized child care waiting list. Additionally, federal resources will improve quality by directing resources to programs that meet Keystone STARS quality standards, and invest in training and education for the early childhood workforce.

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Each of these investments of federal dollars align to the principles of Start Strong PA, a campaign launched in January 2019 to increase access to and affordability of high-quality child care programs, beginning with infants and toddlers. The campaign gratefully acknowledges the role of the Governor and members of the General Assembly for their support of these principles which support healthy child development, working families, and the economy.

Concurrently, state cuts to “what works” represent a missed opportunity to serve even more infants and toddlers in programs that work to give them a quality educational foundation and allow their parents to attend work or training. In a year with a \$900 million state budget surplus, such actions are counterproductive to addressing the child care challenges facing Pennsylvania’s workforce.

Our coalition is dedicated to ensuring that our elected officials understand the value of investing in the full spectrum of high-quality early learning programs that serve children from birth to age five. The Governor and General Assembly demonstrated their continued and growing commitment to expand access to early learning, and we will look forward to working with them to serve many more children and families through greater child care investments in the coming years.

The 2019-20 spending plan included the following investments to early learning and spending plan for federal funds:

- **Increased Pre-K Counts investment:** \$25 million
- **Increased investment in Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program:** \$5 million
- **Increased investment in home visiting programs:** \$5 million
- **Decreased state investments in Child Care Services and Child Care Assistance from fiscal year '18-'19: -\$36 million**
- **Allocation of \$27 million in federal dollars to:** serve 970 infants and toddlers in high-quality programs from the subsidy waiting list, raise quality add-on rates for STAR 2, 3, and 4 providers caring for infants and toddlers, and support apprenticeships for infant and toddler teachers.

Start Strong PA is an initiative of Early Learning PA. Through a statewide collaboration of partners, Start Strong PA aims to support healthy child development, working families, and the economy by increasing access to and affordability of high-quality child care programs for young children. Learn more at www.startstrongpa.org.

The ELPA coalition supports targeted campaigns dedicated to advancing its early learning

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agenda including Pre-K for PA, Start Strong PA, and Childhood Begins at Home. For more information visit <https://earlylearningpa.org>.

Start Strong PA | Partner Organizations

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids | First Up | Mission: Readiness | Pennsylvania Association for The Education of Young Children | Pennsylvania Child Care Association | Pennsylvania Head Start Association | Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children | Public Citizens for Children and Youth | The United Way of Pennsylvania | Trying Together

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