

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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When will they ever learn?

Like the lyrics of a '60s song, here we are, again, in the final week of debates trying to pass a fiscally responsible budget singing the same old refrain.

As a business leader, an employer and member of the Early Learning Investment Commission, I am frustrated.

- In February 2017, Gov. Tom Wolf proposed a \$32 billion budget aimed at closing the nearly \$3 billion deficit through a combination of approaches.
- The budget included a \$75 million increase to early childhood education. By 2024, when next year's kindergartners hit the workforce, more than 30 percent of them won't possess skills to be fully employed.
- House Bill 218 cut \$218 million while debates are ongoing, on the shale severance tax, sales tax and bonds to bridge the deficit. All unresolved.

Fact: Early childhood education isn't a luxury.

The proposed cuts hurt working families. If we care about the future of our workforce, we must invest now. Today, there are 14,000 children on the waiting list for assistance. If HB 218 moves forward as is, that number grows to 25,000.

Our child care workforce earns less than many other sectors. They earn an average of \$9.42 per hour resulting in high turnover and understaffing. These folks are charged with guiding our youth through the most critical period of skill development for the future.

There is no time to lose. Please contact Sen. Jake Corman and encourage him to maintain the proposed funding for ECE. tell him that we have learned.

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