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Letters: Invest in early education - even in the lean years

The budget situation described in an article Friday, " 'Armageddon' for Pa. budget if U.S. funding fails," should not overshadow the fact that some programs are always worth protecting. Pennsylvania's early-education programs, such as Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Keystone STARS, Child Care Works, Early Intervention, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parent-Child Home Program, and Head Start Supplemental, are proven programs, essential to economic recovery today and economic success in the future.

Today's businesses rely on early education. Because of access to reliable early-education programs, parents are more likely to be employed, and have higher productivity and less absenteeism. For every dollar Pennsylvania invests in early-education programs, more than two dollars is circulated throughout our local economies through employment and purchasing of goods and services.

Our workforce development relies on early education. A child's first five years are crucial to brain development that lays the foundation for the academic and social skills we demand of a high-quality workforce. Because of the retirements of baby boomers, by 2018, the United States will have a 25 million-worker gap. We cannot afford to shortchange children for even one year in early childhood.

Maintain our investment in early education; we can't afford not to.

John J. Brennan

Chairman emeritus, The Vanguard Group

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