

State Rep. Phyllis Mundy
D-Luzerne
<http://www.pahouse.com/Mundy>

Browne and Mundy lead call to adequately fund early childhood education programs

HARRISBURG, May 2 – Sen. Pat Browne, R-Lehigh, Monroe and Northampton, and State Rep. Phyllis Mundy, D-Luzerne, today co-hosted a news conference where legislators, a business leader, a law enforcement leader, and advocates discussed the importance of early childhood education and the need for the state to adequately fund those programs.



Mundy, who serves as co-chair of the 102-member Early Childhood Education Caucus along with state Sen. Pat Browne, said programs that ensure children get a good start on life are too important to be cut.

"There is a difference between spending and investing," Mundy said. "Let's not be penny-wise and dollar-foolish. We must maintain the gains we have made in this area during recent years."

"We know these efforts pay dividends immediately and in the long-run," Browne added. "Young people who fall behind in school are more likely to drop out and we know what that means to them and to their communities."

Ted Kleisner, chief executive officer of Hershey Entertainment & Resorts, said money spent on early childhood is a good investment.

"We need targeted investments in areas of education that can generate the highest return," Kleisner said. "It has been proven that early learning has a higher rate of return than almost any other public investment we can make – up to \$16 for every \$1 spent."

Captain Annette A. Oates, Commander of the Uniformed Patrol Division of the Harrisburg Bureau of Police, said, "While there is no substitute for tough law enforcement, experience tells me that we will never just arrest and imprison our way out of the crime problem, nor can we afford to do so. Any comprehensive approach to reducing crime must include high-quality early

childhood education and family support programs that are shown to keep at-risk kids out of the pipeline that funnels them into lives of juvenile and adult crime."

"We know making strong investments in quality early childhood programs saves money in the long run," added Joan Benso, president and chief executive officer of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. "If we cut back on our investments in children at such a critical time, we're crushing opportunities for our kids when we should be creating them."

Michele McEllroy, owner and director of the Cuddle Zone Learning Center in Allentown, said that every day that goes by without an investment in children is a lost opportunity.

"We can't turn back time for these children," McEllroy said. "We can't wait until the economy "turns around" because we don't get a second chance to live those years that have the greatest impact on our lives."