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Contact: Tom Weber

(617) 330-7389 (Work)

(617) 669-3678 (Cell)

[tweber@earlyeducationforall.org](mailto:tweber@earlyeducationforall.org)

## **EARLY EDUCATION ADVOCATES PRAISE LANDMARK BILL**

*“An Act Relative to Early Education and Care” Signed into Law  
at State House Ceremony*

**BOSTON** – The Early Education for All (EEA) Campaign today praised the Massachusetts Legislature and Governor Deval Patrick as he signed *An Act Relative to Early Education and Care* into law at a State House ceremony. The landmark legislation, sponsored by Education Committee Co-Chairs Senator Robert Antonioni and Representative Patricia Haddad, was passed unanimously by both the House and Senate and formally establishes the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The legislation codifies in state law, and helps shape future directions for, a range of programs the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has been developing and implementing over the last three years. Specifically, it directs EEC to create strategic recommendations for the UPK Program and to develop a state policy on kindergarten transition. Furthermore, the bill creates a state advisory council on early education that will work to establish formal quality and performance standards to allow for continuous program improvement. It directs EEC to plan for and address the unique needs of families with infants and toddlers. It also further delineates powers and duties of the Board, Department, and Commissioner of EEC and makes technical changes necessary for the effective development of a coordinated and streamlined early education and care system.

“This bill represents a major step forward for young children and families, further solidifying the Commonwealth’s commitment to providing universal access to high-quality early education and affirming Massachusetts’ standing as a leader in this important area,” said EEA Campaign Director Amy O’Leary. “We commend Senate President Therese Murray, Speaker Salvatore DiMasi, Senate Ways and Means Chairman Steven Panagiotakos, and House Ways and Means Chairman Robert DeLeo for their leadership as well as the members of the Legislature who passed it unanimously. We especially thank Education Chairs Patricia Haddad and Robert Antonioni for crafting and championing this landmark legislation, a legacy that will benefit young children and the Commonwealth for years to come. We also commend Governor Deval Patrick, who has provided strong leadership on the issues by making high-quality early education a cornerstone of his education agenda. There is broad agreement that making a better future for Massachusetts starts today, by investing in early education.”

"I am very proud to be here to celebrate this bill that takes us one very important step closer to providing every child in Massachusetts with the lifelong benefits of strong educational beginnings," said Governor Deval Patrick. "Today is about these kids and

their potential,” he said, referencing the presence of pre-kindergarten students from Boston’s Ellis Memorial Preschool. “It’s about our ability as a state to realize our full potential.”

“Today is a very important day for young children, parents, and the Commonwealth,” said Senator Robert Antonioni, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Education. “Every parent wants what is best for their child and it is our responsibility as state policymakers is to do what is best for our children. This law will help create a system of high-quality early education and care that will give our young children the best opportunity to succeed.”

“Over the past few years, we have laid the groundwork for the Commonwealth to provide voluntary, high-quality, universal preschool,” said Representative Patricia Haddad, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Education. “This legislation emphasizes our continuing commitment to that goal and to children throughout the state and I am pleased to see it come to fruition today.”

Research shows that early education pays dramatic future dividends. Low-income children who participate in two years of high-quality early education programs are 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and twice as likely to go to college. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis estimates a 16% return for every dollar invested in high quality pre-kindergarten. Currently three states have universal pre-kindergarten, while 14 states and the District of Columbia are moving toward universal pre-kindergarten. Last year, 36 states increased investments in pre-kindergarten.

The Early Education for All Campaign is a growing coalition of leaders from business, early childhood, labor, religion, health care, education, and philanthropy, working in partnership with families, grassroots leaders, and state policymakers to make high-quality pre-kindergarten education and full-day public school kindergarten available to every Massachusetts child. The specific goals of the Campaign are to ensure:

- Voluntary, universally accessible, high-quality pre-kindergarten for every child delivered through a mix of public and private programs;
- Voluntary, universally accessible, high-quality full school-day public kindergarten for every child;
- A statewide system to improve the training, education and compensation of the early childhood workforce; and
- A statewide system of high-quality early education and care for all children, beginning at birth.

*The Early Education for All Campaign is an initiative of Strategies for Children, Inc., a non profit organization based in Boston. Its mission is to improve the well being of children and their families through public policy, advocacy, constituency building, and public awareness. For more information, visit [www.earlyeducationforall.org](http://www.earlyeducationforall.org).*

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