

For Immediate Release

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## **MASSACHUSETTS SENATE UNANIMOUSLY PASSES EARLY EDUCATION BILL**

### *Early Education for All Campaign Praises Vote*

**BOSTON** – The Early Education for All (EEA) Campaign today commended the Massachusetts Senate for its unanimous passage of *An Act Relative to Early Education and Care*. The bill, sponsored by Education Committee Co-Chairs Senator Robert Antonioni and Representative Patricia Haddad, formally establishes the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It passed the House unanimously in May and will ultimately go to Governor Deval Patrick for his consideration.

This landmark legislation directs the Department of Early Education and Care to create recommendations for the programmatic, financing and phase-in options for the UPK Program and develop a state policy on kindergarten transition. Additionally, 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.

“Thanks to this vote, voluntary, universal access to high-quality pre-kindergarten is one step closer to becoming a reality for Massachusetts’ young children,” said EEA Campaign Director Amy O’Leary. “We commend the leadership of Senate President Murray, Education Committee Co-Chair Antonioni, and each Senate member who voted to help the young children and families of the Commonwealth. As research has shown, early education is a wise investment in our future, and we are optimistic that Governor Patrick will support this bill when it reaches his desk.”

Early education opportunities have a lifetime impact on young learners in terms of greater academic readiness, higher test scores, and improved social skills. 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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