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Statement on the Massachusetts Senate Ways and Means Committee FY2014 Budget Release

The Massachusetts Senate Ways and Means Committee released their proposed budget for the Commonwealth today. Carolyn Lyons, President and Chief Executive Officer of Strategies for Children, issued the following statement:

“The Senate Ways and Means budget released today provides a new line item of $15 million to decrease the waitlist for early education and care for children from income eligible families. While this new line item is a step in the right direction -- providing an estimated 2,000 young children with subsidies -- there are currently more than 30,000 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers seeking state aid for early education programs.

Experts agree that high-quality early education has a lifetime impact on young learners in terms of greater academic readiness and achievement, as well as improved social skills. Not enough children have these opportunities and despite the recognized importance of these investments, funding for early education and care has been slashed by more than $80 million since FY09. The Senate Ways and Means budget released today increases funding for early education by less than 1% compared to FY13 budgeted levels.

According to the 2012 MCAS results, 40% of Massachusetts third graders, including 60% of children from low income families, are not proficient readers. This rate has remained stagnant for the past decade. The vast majority of these children will continue to struggle in school and beyond. If we as a Commonwealth do not make significant new investments to increase access to, and improve quality of, early education and care we will not change this trajectory.”

Strategies for Children and its signature Early Education for All Campaign work to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Read our Eye on Early Education blog. Find us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter. View us on YouTube.