Strategies for Children Applauds Senate Ways and Means Proposal for Early Education Access, Urges Increased Investments in Program Quality

STATEMENT OF CAROLYN LYONS, PRESIDENT/CEO, STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN
Senate Ways and Means Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Proposal

“Strategies for Children applauds the Senate Ways and Means Committee for increasing early education access funding for income-eligible children. The $17.5 million in new funding will serve thousands of children currently on the state’s waiting list. This amount is higher than both the House and Governor Patrick’s proposals.

Today in Massachusetts, too many children show up for kindergarten already behind, and too many will never catch up. Research clearly demonstrates the lasting short- and long-term positive impact of high-quality early education — on everything from reduced grade retention and special needs placements to improved school readiness, high school graduation, college attendance, adult earnings and health.

The Senate proposal will provide more children with the start they need to succeed in school. However, in expanding access to pre-k programs in the mixed delivery system we must also ensure that we invest in quality programs with well trained and compensated teachers, rich curriculum, developmentally appropriate assessment of child development, and high standards. As the commonwealth increases funding for preschool access, it must simultaneously ramp up program quality funding to ensure that preschool experiences are effective enough to impact children’s kindergarten readiness, and narrow the achievement gap.

We will continue to advocate for increased investments in high-quality early education and care during the Senate amendment process. By targeting funding to early learning programs, we can help close the achievement gap and ensure all of our children have a chance to succeed in school and in life.”

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