

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
EDUCATION
COMMITTEE HEARING

RYAN OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 205
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2010
9:00 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
HOUSE BILL 2205

BEFORE:

HONORABLE JAMES R. ROEBUCK, JR., MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE KEN SMITH
HONORABLE RICHARD T. GRUCELA
HONORABLE BARBARA McILVAINE SMITH
HONORABLE MIKE CARROLL
HONORABLE SCOTT H. CONKLIN
HONORABLE PATRICK J. HARKINS
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI
HONORABLE JOHN E. PALLONE
HONORABLE ROSITA C. YOUNGBLOOD
HONORABLE PAUL I. CLYMER, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE WILL TALLMAN
HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
HONORABLE THOMAS J. QUIGLEY
HONORABLE KATHY L. RAPP
HONORABLE BRYAN CUTLER
HONORABLE MIKE FLECK
HONORABLE DUANE MILNE
HONORABLE THOMAS P. MURT
HONORABLE MIKE REESE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Good morning. We will now
4 bring this meeting to order. We are here today to have a
5 public hearing on House Bill 2205 and I look forward to full
6 discussion on that proposal. The bill would amend the public
7 school code for the Pre-K Counts program. And I want to begin
8 by asking the Education Committee to introduce themselves.

9 Before I do that, I want to note that we have with us
10 Rep. Conklin, who has recently enjoyed measured success in the
11 primary election and, for some reason, he wants to leave this
12 great committee to take to another world as lieutenant governor
13 and I want to congratulate him on his success and I think it
14 crosses party lines when we acknowledge your success, Scott,
15 and I wish you well.

16 REP. CONKLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: With that, we will ask that the
18 rest of the committee introduce themselves. I'm Jim Roebuck,
19 chairman of the House Education Committee; Philadelphia County.

20 REP. LONGIETTI: Rep. Mark Longietti; Mercer
21 County.

22 REP. RAPP: Rep. Kathy Rapp; Forest, Warren and
23 Mckean counties.

24 REP. QUIGLEY: Rep. Tom Quigley; Montgomery
25 County.

1 REP. FLECK: Rep. Mike Fleck; portions of Blair,
2 Huntingdon and Mifflin counties.

3 REP. REESE: Rep. Mike Reese; I represent
4 Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

5 REP. CUTLER: Bryan Cutler; Southern Lancaster
6 County, 100th District.

7 REP. MURT: Tom Murt; Philadelphia and Montgomery
8 counties.

9 REP. TALLMAN: Will Tallman; Adams and York
10 counties.

11 REP. CARROLL: Mike Carroll; Luzerne and Monroe
12 counties.

13 REP. SMITH: Rep. Ken Smith; Lackawanna County.

14 REP. McILVAINE SMITH: Barb McIlvaine Smith;
15 Chester County.

16 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Paul Clymer; Bucks County.

17 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Note that in the
18 members packets are copies of the bill and the bill analysis
19 and the written testimony of those testifiers. As with
20 previous hearings, it is my request -- which is usually
21 ignored, but I will make it a gain -- that those who testify
22 will give a summary of their testimony and that will allow
23 greater time for questions and answers and that will, I think,
24 enhance our ability to understand the proposal before us.

25 First, I would like to begin by asking Rep. Paul

1 Clymer, the sponsor of House Bill 2205, to make some short
2 opening remarks.

3 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I
4 appreciate very much for holding this public hearing on House
5 Bill 2205. It deals with the funding and other situations with
6 Pre-K Counts. As we all recognize, Pre-K Counts has been
7 instrumental and assisting those students to a higher level of
8 learning and so it's before successful. As a result of that
9 success, there has been a waiting list for entering into the
10 program.

11 There is an \$85 million budget for Pre-K Counts. The
12 question is, can we extend Pre-K to more students by more
13 efficient use of the funds? Our co-payments from the program
14 and users fee a possibility. To that extent, my proposal
15 requests the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to
16 conduct a study of the appropriateness of fees and co-payments
17 as part of the Pre-K Counts program.

18 The use of co-payments and fees should be studied in
19 those states that have also funded prekindergarten programs
20 similar to what we have here in PA.

21 My legislation also grants priority funding to at risk
22 students and this is another important issue for us to
23 consider. We also need to establish guidelines for approved
24 providers to engage in outreach and partnership with Head
25 Start, Child Care Works and other child care programs.

1 Then, in the legislation, it prohibits an approved
2 provider from using grant funds for lobbying activities. It
3 also states that we should verify or cause to be verified by a
4 third party, the residence and income of the applicants to the
5 program. It says, The Auditor General may conduct audits and
6 reviews of the grant program.

7 These are the highlights of this proposal. Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman, for your consideration.

9 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you very much. Let me
10 first note that we've been join by two additional members.
11 I've asked them if they would introduce themselves.

12 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: Rep. Rosita Youngblood from
13 Philadelphia County.

14 REP. PALLONE: John Pallone; 54th Legislative
15 District, representing northern Westmoreland County and
16 southern Armstrong County.

17 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Our first testifier
18 is Todd Klunk, Acting Deputy Secretary, Office of Child
19 Development and Early Learning. I would ask that he come
20 forward and make his presentation.

21 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Good morning,
22 Chairman Roebuck, Chairman Clymer, and House Education
23 Committee members.

24 This is the first time that I've been in front of the
25 committee, so let me introduce myself. I am Todd Klunk, the

1 Acting Deputy Secretary for the Office of Child Development and
2 Early Learning. I assumed that duty in January of this year.
3 Prior to that, I served in the civil service as the Director of
4 Finance, Administration and Planning for the same office. And
5 I am here to talk about PA Pre-K Counts.

6 To summarize the Chairman's recommendation, the program
7 has been very successful. Over the last eight years of this
8 administration, we made great strides in the early childhood
9 education here in PA.

10 PA Pre-K Counts -- I do want to touch on a few things,
11 a few of our outcomes of PA Pre-K Counts. Note on page 2 of
12 the testimony, nearly three times as many children were
13 proficient in Personal and Social Development after a year in
14 PA Pre-K Counts. Nearly four times as many children were
15 proficient in Language and Literacy. And just on that note,
16 last evening I spent time in Center County and there was a
17 superintendent of a school district up there who was talking
18 about how successful PA Pre-K Counts and that his
19 kindergartners are now reading on first grade reading levels.
20 So he was quite impressed with the outcomes.

21 More than four times as many children were proficient
22 in Math. Five times as many children were proficient in
23 Scientific Thinking. So these are great outcomes and we're
24 quite proud of the program. And these outcomes, obviously, are
25 predicated on the high quality standards we have on PA Pre-K

1 Counts.

2 I do want to touch on some points of the bill.
3 Addresses Chairman Clymer's bill, passing the current form, we
4 believe would negatively impact the PA Pre-K Counts program by
5 imposing a fee schedule on parents who cannot afford it and by
6 lowering its quality.

7 Currently we have a 300 percent federal poverty income
8 guideline cutoff. There's a lot of national research that
9 shows that families at that 300 percent are just as much at
10 risk as those families above or below the 300 percent, and that
11 does make sense. This group of children and their families are
12 slightly above most of the social safety nets that we have.

13 Forcing co-pays from these parents is bad policy for
14 several reasons. First, these payments are contrary to the
15 purpose and mission of education. Second, the most relevant,
16 the targeted families do not have the resources to afford the
17 fees. We do know from the PA Department of Labor and
18 Industry's Self-Sufficiency Standard Index shows families
19 earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level are on
20 the brink and cannot possibly afford another cost.

21 A second contention with House Bill 2205, this bill
22 allows any provider with any accreditation to be eligible for
23 the program regardless of whether they meet the high program
24 standards of PA Pre-K Counts. This could threaten the program
25 quality, as providers could, theoretically, apply to USDE to be

1 an accrediting agency and then approve themselves. Again, the
2 major success of this program hinges on the high quality
3 standards that we have in effect.

4 So, just to close, I applaud you for bringing this
5 issue before the Committee today. Despite our disagreements
6 with the bill, discussions such as this bring needed attention
7 to early child education. Governor Rendell and the work of
8 this committee have laid the necessary groundwork during the
9 last eight years. I'm also happy to note that both candidates
10 for governor have gone on record supporting Pre-K Counts. I
11 look forward to working with you in the days and weeks ahead.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you very much. Could you
14 give us some sense of the evolution of Pre-K Counts as it has
15 evolved where we were eight years ago as to where we are now
16 and as a measure of perhaps of both success or our nonsuccess
17 of the program?

18 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: So eight years
19 ago, PA is one of eight or nine states that did not publically
20 fund the Pre-K Counts program in their state. In 2006, 2007,
21 PA launched this PA Pre-K Counts program.

22 At that time, we served about 11,000 children. The
23 following year, we added about 800 to 900 additional children.
24 So today, we are serving around 11,800 children statewide. We
25 are in 62 of the 67 counties. Our current providers consist of

1 school districts, Keystone STARS child care providers at STARS
2 3 and 4, Head Start, and licensed nursery schools. So we have
3 a great mix of provider types.

4 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Let me ask Rep.
5 Clymer if he has questions and then we'll go to members.

6 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Good morning. Thank you for
7 your testimony and being here today. I address one of your
8 concerns in an amendment that I have. In my amendment, it
9 removes the guideline exemptions. It removes the provision
10 that would exempt accredit -- accredited providers from program
11 guidelines. That was one of the issues that I think we can
12 address.

13 The other issue on fees and co-pays -- in the bill I
14 have that there should be a study by the Legislative and
15 Finance Committee. They're the ones that would make the
16 recommendations on whether we should have co-pays and fees.

17 Then I also said in the bill and in my testimony, that
18 they should also investigate to see what other things they are
19 doing, you know, very comparable that have similar Pre-K Count
20 programs and how do they have their arrangements. Do they have
21 fees and co-pays, because we want to be fair and at the same
22 time, the purpose is, as you just mentioned, to further expand
23 the program. And if we can get more money into the program,
24 because it's a very tight budget season, those additional fees
25 may allow other children to participate. So the whole thrust

1 of it is to provide equity and to make certain that every child
2 who is on the waiting list has an opportunity to participate.

3 Now, having said that, I don't need any response. But
4 I do have a question that I would like you to respond to. And,
5 again, it is to try to bring things into reasoning and here's a
6 question that I have. According to the school code, the
7 Department is to establish a per student funding level.

8 The Pre-K Counts annual report provides information on
9 the grant amounts and the children enrolled in the various lead
10 agencies. In comparing the per enroll and amounts per lead
11 agency, the amounts verify quite a bite and I'll give you an
12 example. In Dauphin County, there are amounts for the four
13 leading agencies. Halifax Area School District receives \$5,925
14 per student; Harrisburg City School District, \$8,184; Heaven
15 Sent Learning Center, \$7,900; Steelton Highspire School
16 District, \$3,731.

17 The guidelines for the program state that a maximum fee
18 per PA Pre-K Counts students, for a half-day program, the
19 amount is \$3,900 per child. For a full-day program, it's
20 \$7,850. How are these amounts determined? How do we determine
21 that there is a discrepancy, so it seems, in these school
22 districts?

23 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Generally
24 speaking, I can look into each and every one of those. But
25 generally speaking, there are partnerships that are created.

1 So there is a lead grantee. And that lead grantee, let's say
2 it's a school district, might work with three child care
3 providers.

4 But if that school district, as a lead grantee, wants
5 to provide a professional development or employ the
6 coordinator, that goes across the entire partnership, they
7 would then have a higher -- when you just look at the per
8 student costs than their partners. So it depends on what level
9 of services the lead agency is going to supply on behalf of
10 their partners. That's generally the differences between
11 costs.

12 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Then, my next question is, is
13 every provider's budget reviewed or just under the lead agency?

14 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: No. We have --
15 both the partners and the lead agencies are submitted to OCDEL
16 and are reviewed. We actually have that electronically now so
17 we can review it.

18 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: What criteria do you use to
19 review the budgets? What criteria are you using to review
20 these budgets?

21 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: So we do have
22 guidance out there. And in our guidance, there's an appendix,
23 which we actually have framed up what we think is the targeted
24 budget. So we compare each budget line item by those
25 categories to our range of what we think would be an acceptable

1 cost.

2 So we have a low, medium, and high range and we compare
3 each budget category to those percentages. Actually, right
4 now, the Information Technology System, which flag -- let's
5 just say we think that operating costs should be 10 percent.
6 If it comes out at 13, 14 percent, it would actually flag it
7 for us to review and look at their justification. Obviously,
8 we allow them to justify it.

9 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Now, that would be helpful if we
10 could then review that ourselves so we could have that
11 information to help in our analysis.

12 And finally, as of May 2009, 67 school districts had 7
13 partners, 31 Head Start providers had 10 partners, 53 child
14 care providers had 133 partners. How are the grant funds
15 distributed by the lead agency to their partner providers? How
16 do they determine who gets what?

17 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: The lead agency
18 and the partners, they negotiate that out. We do have partner
19 agreements. So it's actually a contract between the lead
20 agency and the partner so that there's no confusion, how many
21 partner -- how many child care slots, there's Pre-K Count
22 slots. They're going to fund what that cost is going to be,
23 whether it is a full-day, half-day, an hour. There's an
24 operating agreement between the lead agency and the partner.

25 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: So the costs are already

1 established. When the lead agency decides to provide money to
2 the partners through that contract, they know what they're
3 going to be paying for each child in that.

4 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Prior to
5 operations, that's correct.

6 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Then that was my question. Do
7 the amounts vary and you've kind of already given the reason.
8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Conklin.

10 REP. CONKLIN: I have a quick question for you.
11 Since Pre-K Counts have been going on for several significant
12 years and I know the studied recently showed that -- well, a
13 few years ago, showed that children who come from poverty
14 families, especially in the African American community, only
15 read about 25 hours before they entered school.

16 Have you seen -- have you been able to track a
17 significant difference with those children that have gone
18 through this Pre-K Counts program, now seeing that they're in
19 fifth or sixth grade? Have you been able to track those
20 children to see the difference that it's made, especially a few
21 years down the road?

22 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: PA Pre-K Counts is
23 three years. So PA Pre-K Counts shows only three years.

24 REP. CONKLIN: Three years. I'm sorry.

25 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: And really, for a

1 standard, the assessment is the third grade PSSA. So we're not
2 there quite yet.

3 REP. CONKLIN: And just one last comment.
4 Somebody that, their family works with these programs and when
5 I look at any type of cost, especially folks that would have
6 put aside to it -- I was recently at a dinner last Thursday
7 night with 450 parents and the majority of those had their
8 children in the Pre-K Counts program and those folks do not
9 have the extra money. The gifts that night were bags of
10 groceries. Just a little side bar on that.

11 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: We share your
12 concern.

13 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Rep. Quigley.

14 REP. QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
15 for your testimony.

16 I just had a couple of questions about the -- I was
17 looking over the report and looking at the district by district
18 -- by counties, I guess, and the agencies who had received the
19 money. But I did have a question on one entry here, I guess.

20 I was looking at the Pre-K Counts annual report where
21 three million of the 2008, 2009 appropriation were used for
22 information technology. And I just had a question of exactly
23 what was that used for? What did that entail?

24 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: The information
25 system that I talked about earlier, that's -- we built an

1 information technology system to track the children, the
2 enrollments, attendance, grantee budgets, partner budgets.
3 It's an electronic system to do budget revisions. So it's a
4 comprehensive data system to track and help us to report out
5 for the annual report.

6 REP. QUIGLEY: Okay. Was a contractor used for
7 that or was it someone within the Department?

8 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: It was a
9 contractor.

10 REP. QUIGLEY: Who was that? Do you know?

11 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: It was Deloitte
12 Consulting.

13 REP. QUIGLEY: Okay.

14 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Just so you know,
15 we shared resources, we built Pre-K Counts on already existing
16 software. So let's talk about child care works. There's a
17 family with a -- a child with a parent with income. We were
18 able to leverage a lot of those existing software, those codes,
19 to build Pre-K Counts. So we used Deloitte, who had that
20 contract at that time.

21 REP. QUIGLEY: And they had the contract to track
22 within their department for other purposes is what you're
23 saying?

24 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Correct.

25 REP. QUIGLEY: And that work is completed as far

1 as the database being established and in place?

2 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: At this time,
3 there is maintenance, upgrades, but, yes, the bulk of that work
4 is done.

5 REP. QUIGLEY: Okay. And then going forward, that
6 would continue from the appropriation within the statute, I
7 guess, the \$85 million, a portion of that would continue to be
8 used for the update of that.

9 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes, correct. And
10 to get to the other member's question about the State
11 Longitudinal Data System, we are trying to match children to
12 appear security ID so that we can answer those questions, what
13 are you seeing the outcomes in third grade, we're hoping
14 kindergarten.

15 But, again, some of that will help us to get to that
16 next level of the State Longitudinal Data System, which we're
17 happy in PA, will be Pre-K to the workforce. So some of that
18 will, again, maintain the current system and then help us
19 complete our work in the State Longitudinal Data System.

20 REP. QUIGLEY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
21 Chairman.

22 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Pallone.

23 REP. PALLONE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
24 you, Deputy Secretary for appearing today.

25 In your database, in your tracking system, are you

1 tracking the individual child if they're somewhat transient,
2 moving from district to district or program to program. You
3 may be in Pittsburgh today, but six months from now, you'll be
4 in Allentown. Is there part of your network taken care of that
5 as well or don't you know?

6 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes. Each child
7 is assigned a unique ID. So, yes, we would be able to track
8 children across the states through this unique ID.

9 REP. PALLONE: So future data as the program
10 continues, we'll be able to track them from year one through
11 years ago, through their graduation then?

12 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Through their
13 graduation of K-12, that's our goal, yes. We're working on
14 that system.

15 REP. PALLONE: Are there any other programs that
16 are tuition or fee-based like this in the publication education
17 arena?

18 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: I mean, the only
19 thing that comes to mind would be the free/reduced lunch
20 program, but that's --

21 REP. PALLONE: That's not really education in the
22 system, that's food.

23 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Correct.

24 REP. PALLONE: I don't think we have another fee
25 for service education programs, do we or don't we that I don't

1 know of?

2 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Just higher
3 education rank. But, K-12, I'm not aware of any.

4 REP. PALLONE: And then the pre-K is, what, three
5 to five?

6 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes.

7 REP. PALLONE: And we've identified almost 12,000
8 three-to-five-year-olds that are currently in the program. Do
9 we have a grasp on how many three-to-five-year-olds there are
10 in PA? We're getting 12,000, how many aren't we getting?

11 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: That's a good
12 point. At the beginning of this current school year, we've had
13 70, 100 children who applied that were not able to receive
14 services because of the captive appropriation. In addition to
15 that, we, in PA, any birth cohort has about 150,000 children in
16 it. So you're talking 300,000 as the universe of
17 three-and-four-year-olds. Like, it's three and four, so it's
18 three through five, but you have to be three or four to enter
19 the program.

20 REP. PALLONE: So we're getting a very small --

21 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: It's four percent
22 of the total population.

23 REP. PALLONE: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank
24 you, Mr. Chairman.

25 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Are there any

1 additional questions? Rep. Rapp.

2 REP. RAPP: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,
3 Mr. Secretary, for being here today.

4 When you're comparing these students at the third
5 grade -- did you say that they are in third grade now or next
6 year they'll be in the third grade for the PSSA's?

7 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Next year.

8 REP. RAPP: When you're looking at those courses,
9 what kind of comparisons are you going to be looking for for
10 those students who have been in Pre-K Counts in comparison to
11 children who have not had the opportunity to be in this
12 program? What kind of things are you going to be looking for
13 in your tracking program for these students?

14 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: We intend, when we
15 get there, to work with our PA colleges and universities and
16 other researchers. We do have some researchers on staff, but
17 we would work with the research community to find out exactly
18 what those academic risk factors and outcomes and how they
19 should all align. So we would consult with our research
20 partners.

21 REP. RAPP: So at the end of next year, you should
22 be able -- the PDE should be able to give us some solid
23 information regarding outcomes of this program; is that what
24 you're saying because of the tracking?

25 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes, that I --

1 REP. RAPP: So at the end of next year, if we
2 called you back for a hearing, we should be able to get some
3 solid data on the benefits of the program?

4 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes.

5 REP. RAPP: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Youngblood.

7 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: I would like to know the number
8 of private current payers that have children in the Pre-K
9 Counts program. How do you count for the people that are
10 paying the maximum fee in four and three star day cares that
11 are in the Pre-K program? Are they calculated in your formula
12 and what determines the amount that is paid by the provide
13 payer?

14 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: In our account of
15 11,800 children, they are the children that are receiving their
16 Pre-K Count services through this appropriation, 100 percent.

17 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: No, I understood that. What I'm
18 basically stating is, you have children in daycare or pre-K
19 currently that are also blended in with children whose parents
20 or grandparents that are private payers.

21 How do you all set the fees that the private payers pay
22 as opposed to what you're getting for the pre-K? Does the
23 private payer's fees help offset anything for the moneys
24 received, because the private payers can pay up to \$250 per
25 child, per week. That's why I'm asking these questions.

1 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Generally, when we
2 -- we have a cost allocation methodology out there, so what
3 you're talking about would be like a mixed classroom and so
4 those charges would have to be dispersed. So let's just say
5 that it was 50 percent private pay, 50 percent Pre-K Counts.
6 Those classroom costs would have to be properly allocated
7 across those two funding streams.

8 So that's how they would determine the fee to charge
9 the family. I don't have that date of how many private fee
10 children with me currently are in PA Pre-K Counts in, like, a
11 mixed classroom.

12 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: I'm just curious because I know
13 I have two identical twin grandsons, with the exception of them
14 and several others -- I'm a private payer. The rest of them --
15 and there are three, the rest of the people are on a sliding
16 scale. So is what I'm paying top dollar.

17 Am I subsidizing for anything and other private payers
18 because the private payer fee constantly escalates, whereas the
19 person that is on a subsidized income may not escalate. So
20 that's why I'm asking. Since there is a mixed setting, what is
21 the amount -- how many private payers are there?

22 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Well, I'll have to
23 get back to you.

24 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Tallman.

1 REP. TALLMAN: Just kind of on the same line of
2 questioning because this has always intrigued me since arriving
3 here, the funding and OCDEL all of these childhood education
4 programs, which I have visited many at this point in time just
5 to get a grasp on it.

6 Can you tell me with certainty -- because we have the
7 commingled funds. Can you tell me with certainty -- because I
8 can't get it from DPW. PDE seems to be a little better on
9 their accountability side. Can you tell me with certainty how
10 much of the Pre-K Counts money is coming from the Department of
11 Public Welfare?

12 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Pre-K Counts is
13 only the PD appropriations. So there's no Pre-K Counts funding
14 coming from DPW. The line item for PA Pre-K Counts is found in
15 -- 100 percentile found in the PDE --

16 REP. TALLMAN: So that's funded 100 percent with
17 DPW money?

18 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: PDE.

19 REP. TALLMAN: PDE money?

20 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Correct.

21 REP. TALLMAN: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Before I go to our
23 next question, I know we've been joined by addition members. I
24 would ask those that have come in late, you receive a demerit,
25 but I'll have them introduce themselves.

1 REP. HARKINS: Good morning, everyone. Pat
2 Harkins from Erie.

3 REP. O'NEILL: Rep. O'Neill from Bucks County.

4 REP. GRUCELA: Rep. Rich Grucela; Northampton
5 County.

6 REP. MILNE: Duane Milne; Chester County.

7 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: I would then go to Rep. O'Neill
8 for his question.

9 REP. O'NEILL: Thank you and I apologize for being
10 late. I have one question because of the economy that we're in
11 and what's going on and I'm a big supporter for early childhood
12 education, especially in the form of a special ed teacher. I'm
13 actually involved with the Pre-K Counts caucus and we're now
14 trying to restore money for this year's budget cut.

15 But, I guess, just one of my concerns is that providers
16 have to provide you with a quarterly report and one of the
17 things that are in a quarterly report is the testimonials. But
18 part of those testimonials have to come from legislators,
19 senators, state representatives and they have to show how they
20 have made contact and what is their position of Pre-K Counts.

21 It seems to me that that's a form of blocking and I
22 guess where it bothers me is that -- it seems to me that we're
23 subsidizing taxpayer money to help these organizations. Do you
24 think that's appropriate that you're requiring them to contact
25 legislators to show them a report at taxpayer's expense, what

1 their positions are?

2 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: I'll first start
3 off by saying that that report has been altered and changed,
4 that those requirements are no longer in effect for the general
5 assembly members and the feedback there.

6 REP. O'NEILL: When did that change take place?

7 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: This year.

8 REP. O'NEILL: So it will be taken into effect
9 when?

10 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: July 1st. I can
11 get you the date of when we altered that report. Although, we
12 do feel that our PA Pre-K Counts grantees and partners should
13 be able to educate the community leaders and we ask them to do
14 that, just like you said, school district, community
15 organizations and we also are quite proud of the program and if
16 they want to share with the members, we encourage that.

17 REP. O'NEILL: I guess my question is -- and it
18 seems like state dollars are being used for this. But my
19 question is, what happens to the provider if don't do that, if
20 they are not contacting the legislators and telling them when
21 they're doing it and not telling you?

22 What happens to a provider in Montgomery County who may
23 not be contacting their legislator?

24 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: There's no
25 repercussions for that. There have never been, no.

1 REP. O'NEILL: Okay. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Are there any other additional
3 questions? I did want to get clarity, you indicated that those
4 who are in Pre-K Counts are about 11, almost 12,000 young
5 people, but the total possible market is 350,000 in that age
6 bracket or somewhere around there.

7 What is happening to those are who aren't part of that
8 program? Are you assuming that most of the different from the
9 11 or 12,000 or 350 are in some kind of Pre-K program that
10 somehow are properly funded or are most of those not receiving
11 any such services? Do you have a way of judging that?

12 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Through our data,
13 we think we're serving, I believe, 20 percent of the preschool
14 population and then the OCDEL funded program. So the other 80
15 percent would be, my guess is through private pay. Their
16 parents would role them into a private nursery school or
17 private pay child care, programs like that.

18 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Or at home.

19 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Or at home,
20 exactly.

21 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: But you don't have any precise
22 way to break that out so that we can get a clear measure -- one
23 of the things that, literally, we're looking at is trying to
24 assist the value of Pre-K's. So you get kids, say, the first,
25 second, third grade, we measure how successful they've been.

1 It would be helpful to know how they've come through
2 the system so you can still see those who were in pre-K, but
3 there would be those others who have been some place else. And
4 I think it's also important to know how they have come to that
5 point and I would hope that as you put this in motion to assess
6 that, that this is done in a fairly precise way.

7 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Rep. Rapp.

9 REP. RAPP: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize,
10 but I -- after Rep. Youngblood spoke, I -- an issue that
11 surfaced in my mind that I was made aware of -- Mr. Secretary,
12 are you aware of any instances where the money allocated to the
13 main entity in a county that they're actually paying more than
14 what a private person would be paying under Pre-K Counts. For
15 example, if someone went to entity A and the parent is paying X
16 amount of dollars, would that entity be getting more money from
17 Pre-K Counts?

18 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: So entity A is a
19 Pre-K Counts provider and we're back to a mixed classroom. Is
20 that what your scenario is?

21 REP. RAPP: Yes.

22 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: So half the kids
23 -- a portion of the kids are Pre-K Counts and a portion are
24 private pay.

25 REP. RAPP: Are there any instances that you know

1 of where Pre-K Counts is actually paying more than the private
2 pay scale?

3 DIRECTOR MATHIAS: Hi, I'm Deb Mathias. I'm the
4 bureau director with OCDEL for the program. An example might
5 be, if it's in a child care facility, that the requirements for
6 Pre-K Counts are higher than the requirements for regulated
7 child care facility.

8 The Pre-K Counts program is paying for the certified
9 early childhood teacher and all the other early learning
10 requirements to give that really super high quality. A parent
11 that's buying child care through interview with the center or
12 whatever might find out about the quality of the issues, but
13 it's not a big time requirement to have a certified teacher in
14 regulated child care.

15 REP. RAPP: I guess that concerns me more than the
16 situation that Rep. Youngblood was speaking of, that we're
17 subsidizing at a higher rate than providers or requesting
18 private payers to pay for it. Is that -- that's how I'm seeing
19 it in my mind.

20 DIRECTOR MATHIAS: I don't think we have a lot of
21 mixed classrooms, so we don't have an answer for that right
22 now. Do we know specifically of examples where that is
23 occurring now? No.

24 REP. RAPP: Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. If I'm

1 understanding your question, Representative, if I could just
2 ask a question. Is not the progress of pre-K in part to set a
3 standard for delivery of these services.

4 In my mind, there might then be a case where, in
5 setting that standard, you have higher expectations for
6 providers or those who are doing the services, which might
7 account for differential in the payment levels. I'm not
8 certain, but it would seem to me that that's in part of what
9 might be a factor here. Rep. Reese.

10 REP. REESE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to
11 make sure that I understand this. Can you talk about the
12 income guidelines for Pre-K Counts? Can you talk about the
13 bottom and the top, rather than talking about a level of
14 poverty? What kind of salaries are we talking about? What
15 kind of incomes do these families have?

16 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: We put out
17 probably -- the only one that I know is a family of four, the
18 top threshold would be about \$65,000 for a family of four.

19 REP. REESE: Two children, two adults or whatever.

20 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Whatever mix,
21 right. But a family size of four.

22 REP. REESE: \$65,000?

23 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Yes.

24 REP. REESE: What's the bottom? Do we have a
25 bottom?

1 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: No, it's --

2 REP. REESE: No bottom?

3 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: No bottom. It's
4 just under 300 percent of the federal poverty income guideline.

5 REP. REESE: Okay. Can I ask you this, because I
6 actually like Pre-K Counts, I've got to be honest about that,
7 but I don't understand how it would hurt to have a co-pay
8 either.

9 Let me ask you this, if we had a co-pay in place and we
10 can actually serve more children and provide this program to
11 more children, wouldn't that be a benefit? Don't you see that
12 as a benefit of have I mistaken?

13 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Our position has
14 been that this is an education program, and education programs
15 are provided to the public free of charge. That's our
16 philosophy. I don't disagree with you that our goal is to
17 serve more children.

18 REP. REESE: And, ultimately, that's what I want
19 to see happen. And I don't disagree with your philosophy other
20 than with other programs, there are co-pays for lower income
21 families. When you get into child care works, there is a
22 co-pay. I look at 65 and it's not a lot of money, but still,
23 families with lower income levels are paying a co-pay for their
24 service.

25 Again, if it would provide an opportunity for more

1 children to have their service, I don't see that as a bad thing
2 and I guess my only point is -- I understand what you're
3 saying, education isn't necessarily supposed to have a cost
4 attached to it -- but right now, we have a waiting list and a
5 lot of children aren't being served. Perhaps we could shorten
6 that waiting list if we did have a small co-pay. That's just
7 my thoughts on the issue.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. I believe that
10 concludes our questioning. Thank you very much, Secretary, for
11 your presentation.

12 ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY KLUNK: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: I would like to call our second
14 panel forward. We have Kristen Wolfe, Amber Straub and Joan
15 Benso. If they would come forward and give their presentations
16 and then we can go to questions and answers and I ask that each
17 of you might, if you would, identify yourselves as you begin
18 your testimony. Good morning.

19 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: Good morning,
20 Chairman Roebuck, Chairman Clymer and members of the Education
21 Committee. My name is Kristen Wolfe. I am here representing
22 the Smethport Area School District. I'm the Supervisor of
23 Special Education and Early Childhood Programs and it's an
24 honor to be here today.

25 Our school district currently has 953 enrolled

1 students. This enrollment includes 34 fully funded income
2 eligible Pre-K Count students. This was our third year of
3 Pre-K Counts grant funding and we are a lead agency partnering
4 with the Bradford Area School District. We have collected
5 local achievement data on incoming kindergarten students and
6 this data indicates that Pre-K Count students are performing
7 school readiness behaviors and knowledge more consistently than
8 non Pre-K Count students.

9 Our community, like many other world communities, lacks
10 resources and has limited opportunities for children and
11 families seeking Pre-K services. In March, we helped
12 kindergarten registration and 66 percent of the students that
13 registered participated in our programing this year. 66
14 percent of our incoming kindergarten class are below the 300
15 percent poverty guidelines.

16 I would like to tell you that OCDEL provides structure
17 for us, technical assistance and professional development,
18 specifically designed to enhance and support a high quality
19 learning environments and instruction for our pre-K students.
20 With the assistance from OCDEL, we will continue to provide,
21 hopefully, a free standard aligned Pre-K program, which, with
22 stimulating curriculum and instruction.

23 If we were to require co-payments for participation in
24 this curriculum and instruction, it is most probable that
25 families living in poverty in our community would not enroll

1 their children in pre-K.

2 I'm not sure if you're familiar with any of the poverty
3 research that's been done over the past ten years and what it
4 said was about adults living in poverty. A two-year-old raised
5 by professional parents has the vocabulary equivalent to an
6 adult living in poverty. Can you imagine what those students
7 coming to us, what they're dealing with that everyday?

8 I feel that it is our duty to continue to provide a
9 free public education to all students especially now since the
10 early learning standards have been revised and aligned with the
11 grade level standards.

12 My adult role in the district allows me to interact
13 with many families, especially those living in poverty,
14 especially those dealing with students with disabilities, and
15 here to speak on behalf of providing high quality programming
16 early to act with students.

17 Our Pre-K Counts program enables us to reach those
18 student at risk with no financial boundaries. My concern is
19 that parents living in poverty, whether it's at 100 percent,
20 200 percent or even 300 percent, may not view Pre-K as being a
21 "requirement" and therefore wouldn't pay to have their children
22 attend.

23 If we assist on co-payments, those financial boundaries
24 will inhibit not only the future success of the students, but
25 also the success of the PA in meeting student achievement. And

1 I'm very anxious to see the results of PSSA data as the years
2 go on. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you.

4 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: Good morning,
5 Mr. Chairman and Committee members. My name is Amber Straub I
6 am currently the Partnership Coordinator for Pre-K Counts in
7 the Early Childhood Learning Program of Pittsburgh Public
8 Schools.

9 Pittsburgh Public Schools has been and is a leader in
10 Early Education programs, first having Had Start since 1965 and
11 then also implementing full day kindergarten since 1997. PA
12 Pre-K Counts seemed like a natural extension to the work that
13 we were already doing in order to provide high quality early
14 learning programming for children before they reach our
15 kindergarten classrooms given our resources available and our
16 efforts have always started with the neediest children first.

17 And thank you also to Chairman Clymer for and thank you
18 all for hearing our testimony today on Pre-K Counts, a program
19 that has helped our district's young children come to school
20 with the skills they need to be successful in kindergarten and
21 beyond. I'll present some of our data a little bit later in
22 this testimony.

23 Currently, just some background information, Pittsburgh
24 Public Schools has 11 Pre-K Counts classrooms in our school
25 district buildings and we serve 140 Pre-K Counts children in

1 those classrooms. We also, in addition, have 8 community
2 partners -- and there is a typo in your written testimonial.
3 My apologies, I didn't catch that. In those 8 community
4 partners, we have an additional 182 Pre-K Counts children in
5 those facilities that are around the Pittsburgh neighborhoods
6 that also meet the Pre-K Counts standards.

7 In addition -- just so you have a little bit more
8 information -- Pittsburgh Public Schools have 91 additional
9 classrooms and in those classrooms, we use Head Start funding,
10 as well as Accountability Block Grant funds.

11 In our program, we work with families and children to
12 provide a comprehensive, educational program to reinforce and
13 respond to the unique strengths and needs of the individual
14 child and also the family. We provide a wide range of services
15 for children that include education, social services, health,
16 nutrition, disabilities, and also parent involvement. So we
17 encompass the child as a whole.

18 We participate in continuous quality improvement and
19 rely on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, or
20 ECERS. And through use of that assessment, teachers have been
21 able to afford children more opportunities to learning
22 materials throughout the day and they have become more
23 intentional in the ordering of materials for their classroom
24 environment, which is a great thing.

25 We currently use the PA Early Learning Standards for

1 pre-kindergarten from the Office of Child Development and Early
2 Learning, knowing that these standards reflect best practices.
3 These standards are part of the PA continuum from infants and
4 toddlers to pre-kindergarten to kindergarten, to 1st and also
5 2nd grade. This is what is the definition of Early Childhood,
6 it's from birth until grade 3.

7 Our staff at the Pittsburgh Public Schools Early
8 Childhood actually participated in writing these standards and
9 have brought our experience providing high quality early
10 learning to this effort. We support the use of these
11 standards, which are also based on more than 30 years of
12 research defining what is necessary to promote a child's
13 healthy growth and development in all domains of learning and
14 in your written version I have all of those domains and I will
15 not read through those.

16 We understand that OCDEL is committed to building and
17 enhancing a pre-kindergarten program that is high quality and
18 will, in fact, support all school districts and community
19 partners as they strive to maximize the development of skills
20 for each child enrolled in order to ensure positive progress.

21 We participated in the "Pre-K Counts in PA". It's a
22 Public-Private Partnership that was probably the initial onset
23 to this PA Pre-K Counts. During this research -- that research
24 was done independently by Early Childhood partnerships, which
25 is through the University of Pittsburgh, as well as Children's

1 Hospital in Pittsburgh. During this research, "High-risk and
2 vulnerable children showed significant gains in development and
3 early learning skills across numerous domains: Spoken
4 language, reading, writing, math, classroom behavior, and daily
5 living skills." We know that because all participating
6 programs in PA followed consistent standards, the measurement
7 of the Pre-K Counts Program is valid and helps to paint an
8 accurate picture of the success of Pre-K Counts in PA.

9 In our district, we follow the progress of our children
10 with our own data in to kindergarten. I'm just going to
11 highlight a few keys here, which you also have in your written
12 submissions.

13 Transitioning preschool children, given the
14 kindergarten Readiness Checklist, showed that 90 percent of the
15 children mastered cognitive, physical and social-emotional
16 goals by the end of July 2009.

17 Pittsburgh Public Early Childhood children who entered
18 kindergarten in 2008-2009 performed better in Letter Naming
19 Fluency and Initial Sound Frequency than their non-Pittsburgh
20 Public Early Childhood counterparts in the entry assessment of
21 Reading Readiness from the DiBELS.

22 34 percent of Early Intervention children that received
23 inclusive services in 2008-2009 Pittsburgh Public Early
24 Childhood classrooms no longer required special education
25 services in kindergarten. This is a consistent trend for the

1 past three years in our district.

2 At the end of the 2008-2009 school year, 3.2 percent of
3 the district kindergarten children were retained, while only
4 one percent of those children who attended Pittsburgh Public's
5 Early Childhood program were retained. This trend is
6 consistent with 2006-2007 as well as 2007-2008 school years.

7 In conclusion, we know from independent research as
8 well as our own data that children enrolled in Pre-K Counts are
9 doing better than their non-Pre-K Counts peers.

10 I do thank you for this opportunity to testify on this
11 most significant early education program benefitting our
12 children and families in Pittsburgh. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you.

14 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Mr. Chairman, members of
15 the Committee, thank you for having me here today. My name is
16 Joan Benso. I am the President and CEO of PA Partnerships for
17 Children.

18 I think you all know that we're the statewide,
19 independent voice to improve child outcomes in our state. Our
20 vision is to be one of the top ten states in the nation to be a
21 child and to raise a child. Unfortunately, we continue not to
22 get ourselves there. I'm going to abandon my written
23 testimony. It's been a long week for everybody already and
24 I'll just highlight a few point points and try to underscore a
25 few things that I think I've heard some questions about today.

1 Todd said, eight years ago, PA had the distinction of
2 being only one of nine states in the nation that failed to have
3 public funds dedicated to preschool education. Because of your
4 work, we no longer have that shame on our state and that
5 distinction.

6 And I think the thing that I feel best about -- I think
7 if you look at the last period of time, it was the enactment of
8 the accountability Block Grant that gave school districts the
9 opportunities seven years ago, six years ago, to begin to use
10 funds for Pre-K. And then the enactment of the Head Start
11 State Supplemental in the subsequent year that opened the door
12 and then three years ago we enacted Pre-K Counts. So that
13 means that this year, the first cohort of children in Pre-K
14 Counts are in first grade this year. So it'll be 2012 before
15 any of those children take a PSSA, just if we're keeping track.

16 A couple of pieces of data that I really think Amber
17 said it better than anyone. The kindergartners that didn't
18 attend pre-K are three times more likely to be retained than
19 the kindergartners who went to pre-K. The date is pretty
20 astonishing from school districts, the end from private
21 providers.

22 The Department, OCDEL, the Department of Education has
23 actually been doing a work sampling study that shows that the
24 children who attended Pre-K Counts come out of that program
25 remarkably ready for kindergarten. 75 percent of them across

1 domains of learning and readiness are fully prepared for
2 kindergarten.

3 There's a study that was done by a national researcher
4 on the savings to special education in PA. And, basically,
5 what the finding was that 78 percent of our investment in Pre-K
6 Counts could be directly recouped from an average of eight
7 percent special education savings every year. You heard the
8 same thing from Amber and Kirsten's local data. There are kids
9 who attend Pre-K Counts who have an IUP and at that point in
10 time are much less likely to have that IUP in kindergarten.
11 That's not for all children with special needs, and we know
12 that, right? But it has produced remarkable earnings already.

13 I think you'll recall that, probably relentless and
14 quite annoying advocacy PPC did to try to enact Pre-K Counts.
15 We are fairly persistent I would say. We've been working on
16 this for about ten years. But if you would recall one thing we
17 said over and over again and we will say to you again today and
18 we will say as long as we have this program. If we don't
19 insist on the highest quality program, we are wasting the
20 taxpayer's money.

21 It's simply put that Pre-K Counts is not child care and
22 people should not confuse that. It requires certified
23 teachers. It's an education program. It's way more like the
24 third grade than it is like child care. Now, we use child care
25 providers who were at very high quality, we insist on high

1 standards and we're moving our child care system that way, but
2 don't make that mistake. This is an education program. This
3 is not a care program. And we do not pay for extended services
4 for families to meet the working needs of their families.

5 If you look at our quality versus other states, the
6 national institute for early education research about eight
7 years ago convened a national panel of researchers. These are
8 all the people who did all of those studies that we all quote,
9 you know, every dollar spent, gets you 17 back and it will
10 reduce this grave retention. That panel created a ten-point
11 scale for states to evaluate their pre-K quality. Not their
12 child care quality, their pre-K quality.

13 When PA's standards are fully implemented -- program
14 requirements, not standards, are fully implemented with the
15 role-out of teachers certification in 2012 where every teacher,
16 a lead teacher in an early childhood classroom in a Pre-K
17 Counts program will have to have a PA Early Childhood Education
18 certification, an instructional one. You're the Education
19 Committee, you guys know what that means. Nobody else in this
20 building often does.

21 At that point in time, we will get a 9.5 out of a
22 10-point national scale. And you know what the other half a
23 point is, we don't require a hot meal. And I say all the time,
24 we're a lunch away from a 10, but if you can give a kid a
25 turkey sandwich and so I've had some arguments with the

1 researchers.

2 There was a lot of question this morning about how
3 deep we've gone and I just thank you so much for this support
4 that has come out of this committee and this chamber to build
5 this investment. I always use the analogy about PA
6 Partnerships for Children started talking about something
7 called a CHIP program in 1990. And in 2006, we made it
8 universally available to PA's kids. So we know it's going to
9 take a long time to get to 100 percent of our
10 three-and-four-year-olds.

11 The data tells us right now that, you're right, we have
12 about 300,000 three-and-four-year-olds in the state. About 18
13 percent of them have access to either a high quality publically
14 funded Pre-K program funded through a school district's
15 resources, funded through ABG, funded through Head Start,
16 funded through Pre-K Counts, funded through Title 1, 18 percent
17 of them, or they have available to them the opportunity to
18 attend a star four child care program. Until you get to star
19 four, we don't have the same standards, we don't have the
20 teacher requirements.

21 And you've heard both of our school districts say, the
22 most important elements are our teacher requirements and the
23 curriculum. 18 percent of them. If we look at the kids under
24 300 percent of poverty, about 30 percent of that population is
25 being served. But if you slice and dice that, there's some

1 very interesting testimony, I think, inside Deputy Secretary
2 Klunk's report -- testimony today that I ask you to look at.
3 And it's about the preschool educational opportunities of
4 children who live in families between 2-3 hundred percent of
5 poverty.

6 If you look at the education obtainment and you know we
7 do this work at PBC all the way through higher ed, if you look
8 at the education obtainment of that cluster of families, kids
9 from those families, 2-3 hundred percent, they have the least
10 access now because we have initiatives for the deeply poor and
11 those of us who are truer of higher income pay for this stuff
12 ourselves before we get to the public school door. So the 2-3
13 hundred percent of kids are potentially missing out in many,
14 many ways.

15 Now, we fundamentally believe that PBC and we
16 congratulate Rep. Clymer for putting forth legislation that
17 says, let's be sure that we serve that neediest kid first, but
18 we don't think that means that we shouldn't serve that child
19 between 2 and 3 hundred percent of poverty. We've got to get
20 there, it's just going to take time.

21 We're very happy to hear today, Rep. Clymer, about the
22 amendment to remove the accreditation piece. We've had very
23 serious concerns about that and staff has been completely
24 accommodating in discussing those concerns with us.

25 I would also note that much of what's in the amendment

1 to Pre-K Counts, Rep. Clymer's bill, has now been done in the
2 recently enacted regulatory standards for Pre-K Counts that IRC
3 just enacted two weeks ago. And so the timing of the
4 legislation before IRC had taken final action was extremely
5 appropriate to us. But things that we think are very, very
6 important to be doing. They are a verifying family income,
7 assuring that providers are engaging in outreach to find the
8 neediest kids, targeting the poorest children first, requiring
9 180 school days, those are things that are now in regulation,
10 so we don't need statute to do any longer.

11 I guess the only other thing that I really want to talk
12 to is -- there are two other piece -- is the issue of co-pays
13 and the legislative budget and Finance Committee study. We're
14 completely supportive of an LB & FC study to study this. We
15 had concerns with the bill because it is drafted to suggest
16 that if LB & FC finds that co-pays are appropriate, they should
17 just go into effect in the next school year. And we have a lot
18 of experience working on programs that have cost sharing with
19 families. They always go for a regulatory process. And the
20 legislature gets to chime in on the regulatory process.

21 So, again, I think it was just a drafting issue more
22 than anything else and we share the frustration that we do a
23 lot of LB & FC studies that nobody ever then looks at. We all
24 fill our bookcases with blue-bound reports. We worked on an LB
25 & FC study on after school and use development that we would

1 urge this committee to take a very, very careful look at. It
2 was released last summer.

3 But on the issue of co-pays, we need to be careful.
4 There are other states that charge co-pays. But, again, we
5 would say at PA Partnerships for Children that Pre-K Counts is
6 part of the public education continuum. We don't charge for
7 early intervention services for three-and-four-year-old
8 children or children four to five because they're education.
9 We don't charge for the third grade, we don't charge for the
10 ninth grade. School districts do, indeed, charge fees for
11 programs, extracurricular, school lunch, not for education. So
12 we would hope we stay there. Again, remembering the
13 difference.

14 The last piece is that there is some language in the
15 bill on the early learning standards. And again, I would say
16 that this is a confusion that I had myself.

17 OCDEL, I think, inadvertently used the word standards
18 when they met program guidelines or guidance to programs for
19 operations. So those of us who do K-12 work -- standards means
20 one thing. It means academic standards. In Pre-K Counts we
21 have two kinds of standards. We have academic standards, that
22 Pre-K Counts does have early learning academic standards.
23 These are in our regulatory base in PA. They are aligned with
24 the K-12 standards.

25 The way the bill is currently drafted is suggested they

1 would be optional and school districts could use different
2 ones. We don't want the school district to fight the learning
3 standards of fifth graders. We're not going to let them just
4 determine fourth graders -- four-year-olds. It's your role,
5 it's the legislature's role, and the State Board of Education's
6 role, it's state government's role.

7 However, there is also early learning standard language
8 used in the Pre-K Counts program that's really about the
9 guidance the Department gives the programs to operate. And I
10 think you heard Amber speak to things like the ECRES, which is
11 an environmental rating scale. These are the tools that the
12 Department uses to help programs be of high quality.

13 I would note that I spent a fair amount of time in
14 recent days and weeks talking to the Department because I've
15 heard very serious concerns coming from some of you and some
16 staff. And I would urge when this is done a couple of people
17 go visit with staff to get them a little deeper on some of the
18 documents that aren't public because I would say, Rep. Clymer,
19 your staff told us things that we didn't realize.

20 Nobody has lost any money because they didn't do any of
21 this, nobody's had a contract denied, nobody's had service
22 declined and nobody's been sanctioned. Again, they're
23 guidelines. It's direction more than anything else.

24 I'm going to stop there and just add one more point on
25 the data and outcomes. The children who are in Pre-K Counts

1 now are part of PA Secure ID. So we can, indeed, track them
2 moving forward in our student identifier system. That's new to
3 the world. It's going to take us time to get there and it's
4 taking us time on all kids to get there. This committee knows
5 very much about that.

6 So while we can't tell you what happened to third grade
7 PSSA's for kids who were in Pre-K Counts because we haven't
8 gotten there yet, we can tell you with some certainty that at
9 PA Partnerships we've been looking -- we'll finally get this
10 year to the first year of kids that will take the PSSA who have
11 full day K. We can tell you, though, just at looking at
12 districts that have full day K, since ABG and classrooms that
13 have full day K since ABG, those kids rate of reading has
14 improved at twice the rate of kids who attend part day
15 kindergarten programs.

16 So, again, full day K was based on the research, pre-K
17 is based on much of the same research. We would expect the
18 same outcomes.

19 Thank you very much for your commitment and your help
20 and support.

21 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: I would like to thank the panel
22 for their presentations. We'll go to questions from the
23 committee. Rep. Clymer.

24 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
25 thank you ladies for your very good testimony. I appreciate it

1 very much.

2 At the start of my questions, I had mentioned the
3 different school districts and it seems there was discrepancies
4 in the matter of dollars that were paid the school districts
5 per student.

6 Now, Kirsten, you're from the Smethport Area School
7 District. What do you get -- what does the school get per
8 student from Pre-K Counts? Do you know what the --

9 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: Actually, I
10 don't know the exact dollar amount and I apologize for that.
11 I'm fairly new to the school district. Actually, it maybe -- I
12 don't even want to take a guess. I'm sorry.

13 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Amber, do you have any idea what
14 yours might be from the Pittsburgh School District?

15 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: I do know that
16 answer. It is the OCDEL amount that's given is \$7850 per full
17 day child.

18 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Okay. And that amount is
19 determined by the expenses that are --

20 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: No, that amount
21 was the determined amount that was --

22 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: That is the amount that you
23 received?

24 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: Yes, that is the
25 amount.

1 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: One of the things that we have
2 looked at education -- in trying to improve the quality of
3 education is that the primary support of the child is so
4 critical. I think we all agree because you're all educators
5 here before us.

6 Can you kind of fill us in and tell us how important it
7 is? Now, I've been to Pre-K Counts. I've been out to the
8 programs and I know that the parents are there. But maybe you
9 can just, for our edification, tell us how important it is that
10 the parents continue to stay involved, especially, I think --
11 if you don't mind me using your first names -- as you
12 researched and tracked them to the third grade. So something
13 must be happening that's very important with parental
14 involvement. And it doesn't matter who wants to --

15 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: I would like
16 answer on that question and statement. Both of our teachers
17 and the two pair educators that work in that classroom spend a
18 lot of time doing a lot of outreach with families. They do
19 home visitations, we also coordinate trying to get parents into
20 the building and the focus is on instruction.

21 But also from a district's standpoint, if we could
22 bring parents into the building in an early stage, they will be
23 coming in as their student progresses through the grade levels.
24 So that it's something that we work very hard at doing.

25 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Amber, do you want to take a

1 shot at that as well?

2 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: Sure. Since our
3 district has been involved with Head Start since 1965, parent
4 involvement just is basically a natural process for us. As you
5 all know, that if you have invested parents in education, that
6 can trickle down to invested children as well.

7 We do a lot of parent engagement and parent activities
8 across the board. We have 102 classrooms and I do see that
9 carrying on into the K-12 system as well in the particular
10 building that I'm in. That does have three Pre-K Count
11 classrooms.

12 I'm just going to give you a little bit of a
13 testimonial here. Last Friday in our school district was take
14 your father to school day. We have 60 families in our
15 building, 30 fathers and grandfathers showed up, which is an
16 overwhelming response to the parent involvement that we have in
17 our program.

18 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: I think that -- Mr. Chairman, I
19 think that does include my questions.

20 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Grucela.

21 REP. GRUCELA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
22 you, ladies.

23 First of all, like Rep. Clymer, I've been to the
24 classrooms. They are classrooms, they aren't babysitting. But
25 you mentioned that 75 percent from pre-K to kindergarten --

1 maybe I missed this somewhere, what determines readiness for
2 kindergarten out of pre-K? Is it a standardized test? What's
3 the measurement, what's the movement that's used to say that
4 this child is ready for kindergarten and this one had pre-K and
5 is not ready?

6 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Well, I'm going to let
7 the educators do this because they'll do it better than I do,
8 but there is an individualized child assessment. It's not a
9 standardized test. It's an authentic assessment. You would
10 like this.

11 REP. GRUCELA: Why would I like it?

12 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Well, because you and I
13 have gone round and round about some other assessments for some
14 older kids. You would -- they do an assessment across domains
15 of learning and development for children as they come into the
16 program. And then through observation, there's an assessment
17 technique through the year and work sampling. And then at the
18 end of the year, they do another one.

19 Now, unfortunately, we don't know the readiness of
20 other children who go to kindergarten because we don't
21 universally -- some districts do -- do a comparable assessment.
22 So I'll let them talk a little bit more about the content of
23 it. But that's the scope of it. They'll tell you when I'm
24 wrong.

25 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: The assessment that

1 Joan refers to looks at all different areas of cognitive
2 development, math skills, scientific thinking skills. It also
3 looks at physical development as well. It also takes into
4 consideration social and emotional skills as well. And I know
5 in our district we do district one do a kindergarten readiness
6 checklist of sorts and that's where some of the data that's in
7 your testimonial is presented there. And then the kindergarten
8 teachers do also do that same kindergarten readiness test on
9 all of the children that come into the kindergarten classrooms.

10 So we are starting to collect some data on the children
11 who have been in our early childhood program and also the
12 children who are nonparticipants of our program as well.

13 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: And I would
14 say the same. We do a kindergarten readiness at our
15 kindergarten registration including a speech therapist that
16 also screens the children for skills.

17 REP. GRUCELA: I heard something about full day
18 kindergarten versus half day kindergarten in there. People
19 with a full day did better on this test than the half day. I
20 thought I heard that somewhere in there.

21 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Yeah. I sort of used
22 that as an analysis of what we might hope when we get Pre-K
23 Counts kids to the third grade. We've been looking since ABG
24 -- well, since three years after -- four years after the first
25 ABG Grant. And districts that offer full day K with ABG funds

1 and their -- read their third grade reading and mathematic
2 scores and particular their reading scores and we've been
3 pretty focused on the reading agenda.

4 And what we've been able to see now because we can look
5 at two cohorts of those kids is that children who attended --
6 now this is an individual child data because the kids aren't
7 born in KINS yet, they weren't in PA secure ID yet. But if you
8 look at the advocate achievement of districts, full day K
9 versus part day K, the rate of reading improvement improved
10 twice as much in districts that had full day K versus part day
11 K. And that's aligned with the national literature.

12 REP. GRUCELA: That's interesting. One of my
13 local school districts just cut full day kindergarten back to
14 half day kindergarten.

15 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: I think I read about
16 this. I would tell you that they're -- I'm sure you're all
17 monitoring what's happening in your own school districts
18 statewide. But the level of cuts to full day K, if it was
19 usurping the level of cuts that we'll have to enroll the school
20 districts in, if we don't make a significant payment on the
21 education funding formulas, it's going to be a train wreck, at
22 least in our organizations it would be.

23 REP. GRUCELA: Just one last question, Kirsten,
24 just for my edification. Where is Smethport?

25 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: I actually

1 cut that out of my statement because I thought, oh, everybody
2 knows where we are.

3 REP. GRUCELA: I'm a geography nerd. I like to
4 know where little towns are.

5 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: It's a
6 wonderful place to visit, actually. We're on Route 6 and North
7 Central, PA, between Coudersport and Bradford, basically.

8 REP. GRUCELA: What County?

9 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: McKean
10 County.

11 REP. GRUCELA: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Carroll.

14 REP. CARROLL: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Thank you
15 ladies for your testimony. I've always been impressed when I
16 visited the Pre-K Count programs.

17 Can you walk me through -- one of you -- the
18 application process and which applicants are selected and how
19 to do navigate who's going to participate and how we end up
20 with this waiting list? How one lands on the waiting list as
21 compared to one landing successfully in the program is my
22 question.

23 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: I'll try to
24 answer your question as best as I can. I don't oversee that
25 part of the process because we do have enrollment specialists

1 who do that. But I can tell a little bit about what I know.

2 Our application process is pretty extensive dur to Head
3 Start regulations as well. Families do submit an application
4 along with supporting documentation and ten family service
5 specialists -- they are kind of like our social service folks
6 in our program -- review the applications and they have a point
7 system based on things, such as income, because we do have to
8 meet income regulations for Head Start as well as Pre-K Counts.

9 Also, too, to reach the neediest families, we'll look
10 at other criteria as well as far as what is the family's
11 structure, is the child a foster child. Other criteria that
12 make them ask risk for academic failure, are really the things
13 that are looked at when the application is reviewed.

14 REP. CARROLL: So family income is not the primary
15 determiner on whether they're going to be selected?

16 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: It is for the
17 programs where it needs to be determined, yes. For instance,
18 for Pre-K Counts, doesn't matter if you are making \$350,000,
19 but your child is an English language learner, even though you
20 may be ask risk for academic failure, they still have to meet
21 the income regulations for that.

22 REP. CARROLL: I understand that, but, I mean, in
23 terms of those who are in the spectrum of the eligible income
24 families, are we taking the poorest kids before the slightly
25 better off?

1 PARTNERSHIPS COORDINATOR STRAUB: Yes.

2 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: We don't do that in any
3 other income based program. I mean, we work in a lot of them.
4 Families apply, basically, first-in and first-out. So when the
5 CHIP program wasn't tapped -- it was untapped, it was first-in,
6 first-out.

7 You meet the eligibility guidelines and you're on the
8 list. And in Pre-K Counts, we apply other factors, disability,
9 English language learners, childhood foster care, and the
10 lowest income kids first. So programs go through an
11 application process where they collect a list of people who
12 could be eligible for the fall and then they determine the
13 neediest kids and enroll them. And then --

14 REP. CARROLL: The neediest, financially?

15 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Yes, but financially
16 trumps them all.

17 REP. CARROLL: So if we would look at the waiting
18 list and then look at the income of those families, we would
19 find that they would be higher on the spectrum than the
20 families that had children that were --

21 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: In the communities, they
22 are enrolled. They are waiting --

23 REP. CARROLL: I understood that. In each
24 particular community, the two communities here would be far
25 different, Smethport and Pittsburgh, I'm sure.

1 Thank you very much.

2 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: I would
3 actually like to add to that. In our school district, we did a
4 very extensive outreach this year and just contacting people in
5 the community to talk about what our programming is and how
6 successful it is. And I did note in my statement, I was
7 overwhelmed and excited about the level of interest that we had
8 for our program.

9 We do accept applications. We put them out in February
10 and I think we maybe have one or two spots available at this
11 point. But we do look at income first and foremost.

12 I do timestamp them, but if I were to receive an
13 application at the later stages of reviewing them, someone at
14 100 percent poverty, we do take that into consideration,
15 definitely.

16 REP. CARROLL: Okay. Thank you very much.

17 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Youngblood.

18 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: No one would assume to elaborate
19 on a four star when you say a day care is just day care. Well,
20 in a four star day care, when the child reaches age two, they
21 do a total assessment to see if they are -- there's still a
22 learning process and it's not just babysitting. So I took
23 slight offense that day care is a babysitting process. It's
24 not.

25 You can judge, they meet with the parents, there are

1 need teachers in a four star day care. And in the three star
2 day care, where they do meet with their parents, if anything,
3 intervention, they tell the parents, they bring it in to make
4 sure.

5 But I'm still curious about the mixed partnership,
6 where you have Pre-K Counts and you still have children where
7 there are private payers. How does that blend? So what are
8 the number of private payers who are in with the mixed setting?

9 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: Rep. Youngblood, I'm
10 sorry if I left you with the wrong impression. There is no way
11 in the world that I think regulated child care in PA is
12 babysitting. We have some of the strongest regulatory
13 standards in the state -- in the country.

14 But until you get exactly where you said, to stars
15 three and four, you don't start to look like a more traditional
16 education program. You don't necessarily have a curriculum in
17 place that's in line with learning standards. The teacher
18 requirements for childcare centers are not as rigorous as they
19 -- at lower star levels. So I couldn't agree with you more at
20 the top.

21 Unfortunately, less than five percent of the child care
22 spots in the state of PA are of the highest quality for all
23 kids first to five. So we've done a great job improving child
24 care quality and it's another -- and we have the right pathway
25 at Keystone STARS, but we've got a long way to go to get there.

1 I think the challenge is, though, sometimes is that
2 people think it is what they think -- Pre-K Counts is what they
3 think babysitting is, right? And that's wrong as well.

4 I have to tell you -- what I know about Pre-K Counts in
5 private programs is that more often than not there's a Pre-K
6 Counts classroom, right? And the Pre-K classroom -- this is
7 just my experience, totally antidotal -- doesn't have private
8 pay families in it. There might be another preschool classroom
9 in that program that has private pay families in it mixed with
10 children in child care subsidy.

11 But the Pre-K Counts program is meeting all rigorous
12 academic standards, not just the health and safety standards
13 that are imbedded in child care regulations, but the academic
14 standards. And they are documenting that the expenses that
15 they are charging the Commonwealth are supporting the costs in
16 that classroom. And not the overall program and not the -- I'm
17 sure OCDEL would be happy to walk you through with it, but
18 budgeting is rather complexed. These folks just don't get X
19 dollars. They've got to justify every penny and they all don't
20 get the same amount as the other --

21 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: I think all of the children are
22 treated equally. It's just that you would have maybe --
23 usually it's 12 children. You maybe have four under the Pre-K
24 and then you may have another two that are subsidized and then
25 the others in that particular classroom are private payers,

1 where they're paying privately, but they are all getting the
2 same education. And I think it's good because it helps the
3 children to accept and understand each other's differently
4 ethnicity and their environments and I think it's a good for
5 them.

6 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: That's true and very
7 high quality progressed. And, again, you can't be a Pre-K
8 Counts provider unless you are a stars three and four.

9 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: I did my homework before --

10 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: I know.

11 REP. YOUNGBLOOD: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. I know Rep. Clymer
13 has a final question. I want to ask one before we get to his
14 concluding question and his remarks if he wishes to make them.

15 Kirsten Wolfe, you mentioned the negative impact that
16 payments would have on those who are in poverty and the
17 programs that you were involved with. I guess my question,
18 though, is, should there not be or is it unreasonable to expect
19 those who have greater means to, in fact, play a part of the --
20 of cost to the services that they receive? I'm not talking
21 about people who are in poverty, but those who are middle class
22 or legislators or others, that they might have the means --
23 should they not then -- would it be unreasonable to ask them to
24 pay a portion of the cost to the services that you provide?

25 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: Are you

1 speaking above the 300 percent?

2 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: I'm sorry?

3 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: Are you
4 speaking of people that are above the 300 percent poverty?

5 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Sure, yes.

6 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: I'm on both
7 sides of the fence with that question, I'll be honest with you.
8 We do have people in the community that -- in our Smethport
9 Bureau that feel strongly that they really would like their
10 students to participate in their Pre-K programming next year.
11 It was a decision in our district by Central Administration and
12 perhaps the Board of Ed, that we were only going to include
13 children that fell within the income guidelines.

14 So the big issue is, we have a lack of services in our
15 community. I'm on both side of the fence and I say that
16 because, when we're providing education for our students, we
17 really have to look at -- as Joan had referenced -- we don't
18 ask people to pay a part for third grade, ninth grade, twelfth
19 grade. So when we look at the early learning standards now
20 being revised and incorporating that into our high quality
21 program, I wouldn't expect anybody to have to pay for
22 education.

23 So part of what my duty is, I think, as a district
24 employee, is to listen to what the other families above the 300
25 percent are saying and to try to work and expand our program to

1 include families.

2 I would not be in favor of a copayment even for a
3 legislator's child or my own children to participate. I would
4 want them to be able to come free of charge as well. But it is
5 up to the individual school district to assume responsibility
6 and to see it as a priority and it will be a priority of mine
7 as I keep working in the school district.

8 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. Rep. Clymer.

9 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
10 thank you ladies for attending the day and for testifying.

11 Now, you are the experts in the field of education. Is
12 there -- because of your vast experience and in-depth knowledge
13 with the Pre-K Counts program, do you see any recommendations
14 that you could provide to the committee that would be helpful
15 to us as we seek to expand the number of enrollings? I mean,
16 how can we -- the dollars are going to stay the same, \$85
17 million, \$86 million. To your knowledge, is there any way that
18 we could expand the program and include more students? Any
19 thoughts?

20 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISOR WOLFE: Actually, as
21 time goes on in our district, in looking at -- and I'm new to
22 the budget process. I work with the district business manager
23 and also another individual who is in charge of the grant
24 before I came on board.

25 And in talking about the budget and the services that

1 we provided this year -- the professional development,
2 specifically, that we've provided teachers this year, I think
3 we can take a look at individual budgets and maybe reposition
4 budgets in other ways. For example, OCDEL provides -- wants us
5 to provide high quality training around curriculum and
6 instructions for teachers, which we did this year. And we
7 satisfied, I think, our last couple of standards that we needed
8 to follow.

9 For professional development next year, I'm kind of in
10 charge -- well, I'm in charge of the district's professional
11 development in terms of a least restricting environment and
12 that's one of the greatest things we can provide in our
13 district is an inclusion of students with disabilities early
14 intervention comes into our programming and assists with things
15 in the classroom.

16 So I will be able to provide professional development
17 school wide for our pre-K teachers up to our grade 12 teachers.
18 So when I take a look at the budget, we may be able to
19 reappropriate funding based on the level of where we're at and
20 maybe use the funding in a different manner to reach more
21 students. That would be my suggestion.

22 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: I guess my thought on
23 this is, there maybe some things in individual budgets that
24 districts and private providers will be able to do in the years
25 to come. But we're not going to get from 18 percent of our

1 three-and-four-year-olds to 25, 30, 50 percent of our
2 three-and-four-year-olds by playing at the edges. And all of
3 us who have worked in this town for a long time know that at
4 the end of the day, we will pass a budget and that budget will
5 spend more money. And that budget will spend more money on
6 things more than basic education.

7 There are proposals in that budget to spend more money
8 and this is a program that was actually proposed to be cut,
9 small cut, little cut. People tell me, oh, it's less than 100
10 kids, Joan. And I would urge you to think about how you get it
11 back to the funding level it enjoyed in the current fiscal
12 year.

13 And we think about, just as we did with our CHIP
14 program, that we chip away at this. Maybe we say to ourselves,
15 you know, our goal -- we've been -- I would note that --
16 candidates have been saying things like, we would double the
17 number of kids that are in pre-K during our tenure. Well, that
18 would be a good step to go from almost 20 to 30 -- 17, 18
19 percent to 35 percent over the next four to eight years. We're
20 not going to get there over night, but it's going to take money
21 to do it. And states that are further along than we are in
22 this are spending more money.

23 The program costs what the program costs. OCDEL can
24 clearly document that these are not inflated rates, that this
25 is what it costs to employ the staff and deliver the services

1 that are getting kids ready for school and I think we're hard
2 pressed in this building to find money that works better than
3 this.

4 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: What states are ahead of us in
5 this program?

6 PRESIDENT AND CEO BENSO: There are a number of
7 states that have universale pre-kindergarten available,
8 Florida, Illinois, Oklahoma. I could go up -- Oklahoma, Rep.
9 Clymer, makes high quality Pre-K universally available through
10 its school funding formula. Of course, they fund their school
11 adequately and equitably too.

12 Illinois has a universal program. Florida has a
13 universal program. New Jersey has a much higher penetration
14 than PA does, New York, much high penetration, Maryland. Lots
15 of states are ahead of us.

16 CHAIRMAN CLYMER: Okay. Thank you very much for
17 sharing that information. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you. I would like to
19 thank all of those who testified today. I would like to thank
20 the committee members who attended. I would also like to thank
21 our recorder for her services this morning. The meeting stands
22 adjourned. Thank you.

23 (The hearing concluded at 10:45 a.m.)
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I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence
are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on
the within proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of
the same.

Kelsey J. Dugo
Notary Public