



PRE-K OUR WAY

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PRE-K OUR WAY NEWS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER **DECEMBER 2016**



In mid-November, Pre-K Our Way hosted attendees from 18 of NJ's 21 counties and at least 33 of NJ's 40 Legislative Districts—and representing more than 150 different communities. [The purpose: to share plans to raise the 2017 priority of pre-k expansion in NJ.](#) More in store for 2017! Watch our website for info about two March meetings. Until then, [read what the Gloucester City News wrote](#) or check out the event info as reported in nearly 90 different local Patch news services.

FEDERAL PRE-K \$\$ FOR NJ

Congratulations NJ—and thank you to the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services for NJ's recent award of funding in the third round of Preschool Development Grants—money that will be used to help expand access to high-quality preschool. [The recent federal grant announcement](#) was a fantastic way to end the year and feature the rising priority of pre-k; however, it doesn't address the 50,000 3- and 4-year-olds waiting each year for what was promised by NJ law in 2008.

CONTINUED LEGISLATIVE COMMITMENT FOR NJ PRE-K EXPANSION

"Obviously we're thrilled to get the \$17.5 million because it gives us the ability to continue the progress that we've made with pre-K. But look, we're not going to stop. We need to fund it properly so that every child in the state gets to where they have that opportunity to get that early education because it's a game changer," said State Senate President Steve Sweeney. Pre-K Our Way agrees with the commitment and says thank you to State Senate President Sweeney and other legislative leaders in both the State Senate and General Assembly for [continued strong, vocal support for NJ pre-k expansion.](#)

2016 IN REVIEW—RAISED PRIORITY FOR PRE-K EXPANSION

Expanding New Jersey's pre-k program has become a bipartisan priority among parents, communities and policymakers. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan effort, Pre-K Our Way helps communities bring New Jersey's high-quality pre-k to their children. In less than two years, we've gathered 27,000+ supporters, mobilized 50+ different advocate organizations representing hundreds of thousands of members, and worked with a Leadership Group that includes former governors Kean and Florio. Pre-K Our Way has identified individual voices and stories in every county and across more than 400 different communities; we've gathered people together at three regional forums, in more than 80 local community meetings and through strategically executed communication and messaging to let elected officials know that pre-k expansion is a priority for New Jerseyans.

Beginning in 2015, Pre-K Our Way established pre-k expansion as a legislative and public priority. Examples of that focus throughout 2015 include: Senate Education Committee Hearing on Benefits of Pre-K; inclusion of pre-k expansion as part of the Legislative Leadership Policy Agenda Priorities by both the State Senate President and Assembly Speaker; NJ Spotlight's year-end wrap-up citing that 'more has happened in pre-k expansion in the past few months than in the previous year, or maybe even since 2008'. That work laid the foundation for some examples of expanded legislative and media support in 2016: Assembly and State Senate pre-k expansion bill introductions (February 2016); inclusion of pre-k expansion as part of the Legislative 2016-2017 Budget (June 2016); recent op-ed by Assembly Speaker and Assembly Education Committee Chair to propose funding for pre-k as part of school aid funding discussion (Fall 2016). In addition, an [August 2016 Star-Ledger Editorial Board](#) stated their support for NJ's pre-k program.

Pre-k expansion won't happen overnight, but it will happen if we continue to make it a priority for our current and coming state leaders.

2017—THE TIME IS NOW.

Pre-K Our Way's focus in 2017 is inclusion of pre-k expansion as part of the 2017 gubernatorial and legislative election discussions and debates, and to make the long-ago promised pre-k expansion part of the agenda of a new administration in 2018.

More than eight years ago, New Jersey promised to expand its existing high-quality pre-k to more than 50,000 3- and 4-year-olds. 50,000 kids are still waiting each year, and that's not right. 2017 is the time to raise our voices and make pre-k expansion a priority in our state!

Beginning in January 2017, Pre-K Our Way's messaging expands statewide targeted communication to drive an increased priority for pre-k expansion. Pre-K Our Way will continue all of its existing local communication and outreach efforts to develop public and legislative education while significantly expanding an enhanced media outreach to drive public action. The target audience: existing legislators, gubernatorial candidates and those elected in 2017 who will act on the 2018-2019 State Budget—a new Governor and the newly elected Legislature.

IMAGINE...

As Pre-K Our Way uses the coming holiday weeks to finalize plans and messaging—and events—for 2017, let's imagine a NJ governor saying this during their administration in 2018 and beyond: "Continually building a strong foundation for children's growth and development has been one of my priorities since the day I took office." **It happened in GA, now let's use 2017 to make it happen in NJ!**

Have questions? Contact us at info@prekourway.org

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