



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.

www.prekourway.org

PRE-K OUR WAY NEWS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JULY 2017



New Jersey celebrated Independence Day on July 4 - and also **the first significant pre-k expansion funding in nearly a decade! Pre-k is on NJ's agenda and is a priority in Trenton.** Pre-k expansion was included as part of the discussion on school funding! You did it - but there's more to do.....

THE INITIAL STEP: \$25 MILLION SIGNED FOR PRE-K EXPANSION

The NJ State Budget signed for the year beginning July 1, 2017 includes \$25 million for pre-k expansion! **The funding is the initial step in bringing NJ's full-day, state-funded pre-k to 50,000 3- and 4-year-olds across hundreds of NJ's communities.** It is **"the first significant expansion in nearly a decade."** (NJ Spotlight 06/23/17)

Pre-K Our Way believes that this is an important, *initial* step in expanding NJ's high-quality, state-funded pre-k per the 2008 law. Funding for pre-k expansion in the recently signed NJ State Budget **demonstrates the raised priority of pre-k across our state** and the **bipartisan commitment** to pre-k expansion from our elected officials.

SAY THANKS!

Both **Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Prieto consistently cited and supported pre-k expansion as one of their top legislative - and budget - priorities.** Let them know that you value their constant support, and the initial step of funding \$25 million for pre-k expansion. Please email them to **say thanks for supporting pre-k expansion** - and for making this the initial step in bringing pre-k to some of the 50,000 3- and 4-year-olds in our state. **Please email Sen President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Prieto when you finish reading this at sensweeney@njleg.org and asmprieto@njleg.org.** It is your summer assignment!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Pre-K Our Way's purpose is to provide public education, develop legislative and gubernatorial support and encourage funding for pre-k expansion as promised by law in 2008. Our focus remains funding for additional expansion - and long-term commitment to pre-k as part of the school funding formula - in the first budget of a new governor in 2018. However, we'll share information about the implementation process as it is made available by the Department of Education.

As the signed budget is just a week or so old, details beyond what is contained in the signed budget language aren't yet developed or available. **The budget signed on July 4, 2017 provides that the Commissioner of Education**

will determine which districts will receive funding. Following is the exact signed budget language re: preschool expansion funding in the amount of \$25 million (page 1 of 5 in <http://politi.co/2tMGcHw>) "From the amount hereinabove appropriated for Preschool Education Expansion Aid, the Commissioner of Education shall provide State aid to districts for the purpose of providing free access to full-day preschool for three- and four-year-old children residing in the school district in accordance with the preschool quality standards adopted by the Commissioner. The commissioner shall determine which districts shall receive Preschool Education Expansion Aid based on a district's demonstration of its readiness to operate a preschool program consistent with the preschool quality standards."

OUR GOAL REMAINS UNCHANGED... 2018, AND THE FIRST BUDGET OF THE NEW GOVERNOR

Summer vacations are underway, and Pre-K Our Way is no different! However, we're using July and August to enhance our plans for continuing the public, legislative and gubernatorial candidate education efforts for the balance of 2017 and beyond. **Pre-K Our Way's goal remains unchanged: funding for pre-k expansion in the first budget of a new governor in 2018.**

Stay connected with Pre-K Our Way throughout the summer via social media and email as we get ready for September and 2018! Please encourage your friends, family members and colleagues to check us out at www.prekourway.org.

THANK YOU!

Throughout the past 18+ months, **support for NJ's pre-k expansion has grown through focused messaging and targeted communication:** 27,000+ supporters, 50+ advocate organizations, thousands of phone calls to legislators - and another separate thousands of emails to legislators. Yes, THOUSANDS of calls and THOUSANDS of emails! Thanks to that foundation, pre-k expansion is now a state priority; it was part of every gubernatorial debate and had 4 major candidates supporting it. *Pre-k expansion is part of the discussion in Trenton and throughout our state.*

Thank you for all that you've done to make pre-k expansion a priority - together, we have more to do!

PRE-K IN THE USA...

High-quality early childhood education is one issue that unites Americans on both sides of the aisle. The First Five Years Fund's new poll findings are clear: 79 percent say to make pre-k more affordable to parents. <http://ffyf.org/2017-poll>

Indiana just expanded pre-k from 5 to 15 additional counties; it is their 2nd round of funding. <http://bit.ly/2sUC31I>

Have questions? Contact us at info@prekourway.org

Tel. 609.246.0034 EXT. 2 Toll Free: 844.335.PREK (7735)

PRE-K OUR WAY © 2014 PRE-K OUR WAY, INC. A NJ Nonprofit Corporation. All rights reserved.