

The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce today announced its support for the expansion of New Jersey's high quality, pre-k education so it is available to every 3- and 4-year-old in 100-plus school districts. In 2008, the Legislature put in place a plan to expand the state's pre-k program, but it has never been implemented or funded.

"New Jersey has one of the most successful, public preschool programs in the country," said Amy B. Mansue, chair of the N.J. Chamber's Board of Directors and president and CEO Southern Region of RWJBarnabas Health. "However, only 35 communities have access to one of these programs, even though access to full-day, pre-k is essential to our current workforce - the working parents of New Jersey's 3- and 4-year-olds."

Tom Bracken, state chamber president and CEO added, "The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's goals are to create jobs and foster a New Jersey that is more competitive and business-friendly. Pre-k expansion is important to those goals because it helps the state's children become better citizens."

Pre-K Our Way, a New Jersey organization that advocates for pre-k expansion, has also garnered the support of former Govs. James J. Florio and Thomas H. Kean.

"The investment we make today in the education of our youngest citizens will yield real results for both our children's and state's future," said Florio. "Assuring that our children enter school ready to learn should be our highest priority."

Kean stated, "There are a few priority reforms we need to make to improve education in our state. One of our highest priorities should be the availability of quality, pre-k programs for all of our children. These programs offer our best hope for future success in school and life."

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About the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation

In addition to the State Chamber's role as the voice of business in New Jersey, its New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation uses the power of the business community as future employers to improve student outcomes. The Foundation engages in activities that address three focus areas: developing the workforce pipeline by ensuring that all young adults are prepared for post-secondary education, work, and life; promoting interest in, and readiness for, careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); and enhancing employment preparation for job candidates with disabilities.

About Pre-K Our Way

Pre-K Our Way, a nonpartisan and nonprofit community-based organization, coordinated through a diverse group of business leaders, parents, foundations, early childhood educators, community leaders interested citizens and elected officials, engages communities on expanding NJ's existing high-quality public preschool for their children. Visit their website at www.prekourway.org for more information.