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**News for Immediate Release**

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**Governor Corbett Highlights Early Learning Investments, Tours Local Childcare Center**

**Pittsburgh** – Governor Tom Corbett today joined early learning advocates and other officials for a tour of the Small World Early Childhood Center II in Pittsburgh, where he reemphasized his commitment to high quality early learning.

Corbett’s 2014-15 budget proposal includes an additional $25.5 million investment for early education with $10 million to serve more children in Pennsylvania’s Pre-K Counts program.

“As a father, and now as a grandfather of a two and a half-year-old grandson, I believe investing in our children’s education as early as possible is critical to building a better future for Pennsylvania,” Corbett said. “That’s why my budget proposal calls for an additional $25.5 million to be invested into early education.”

An additional $10 million into Pre-K Counts will allow more pre-school age children to access high-quality learning programs. Pre-K Counts programs have consistently delivered high-quality Pre-K education to 3- and 4-year old children who are at risk of academic failure.

Corbett’s budget proposal builds upon past funding increases of $46.5 million into Pre-K Counts, Head Start and Early Intervention programs. Since taking office three year ago, an additional 11,000 children are being served through Corbett’s commitment to early education.

“I have worked over the past three years to make investments that will help our children learn as early as possible,” Corbett said. “Those efforts have produced results that are allowing more children than ever before to be enrolled in high quality early learning.”

Corbett’s budget proposal supplements a $51.7 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant awarded to Pennsylvania in December 2013.

Corbett was joined by early learning advocates including Acting Pittsburgh Police Chief Regina McDonald on behalf of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Rear Admiral Thomas Wilson, U.S. Navy (Ret.) on behalf of Mission: Readiness; and Senior Vice President at PNC Bank, Tom Lamb, on behalf of the Early Learning Investment Commission.

“Poor educational achievement is a leading reason why 75 percent of our young people are not eligible for military service, creating future national security concerns," said Rear Admiral Wilson. "What is happening in these early learning classrooms today will impact our military’s and our civilian businesses’ ability to find the skilled workforce we will need for the future."

Department of Public Welfare Deputy Secretary Barb Minzenberg, Representative Dan Miller (D-Allegheny) and Representative Hal English (R-Allegheny) were also in attendance.

The Small World Early Childhood Center II center is a high-quality early learning center as demonstrated by its Keystone Star 4, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. State funding through Keystone Stars and Pre-K Counts allow the center to provide at-risk children with high quality early learning.

For more information, visit [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov).

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