

For Immediate Release: June 6, 2013

Contact: Diane Mastin, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
518-463-1896, x124

Emily Karol, Alliance for Quality Education, 518-463-1896 ext. 102

Making the Smart Investment: **Congressman Paul Tonko to Join Children, Advocates for National “Early Learning Days of Action” on June 7th**

ALBANY – U.S. Representative Paul Tonko will join New York State early childhood education advocates at Albany Community Action Program Head Start, 7 Morton Avenue, on Friday, June 7th at 10:00 a.m.

The event is part of the national “Early Learning Days of Action,” to show support for President Obama’s Early Learning Initiative, which calls for an investment of \$75 billion in early childhood education programs and builds on new investment in pre-K in New York, which was passed in this year’s state budget.

“When the research shows that 75% brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before a child turns five, we must pay more attention to the early years of learning,” said **Representative Paul Tonko (D-20)**, who will be reading to children as part of the event. “New York State took an important step with new pre-K funding this year. President Obama’s Early Learning Initiative will build on that investment -- for our children, our state and our country.”

Spearheaded by the National Women’s Law Center based in Washington D.C., hundreds of organizations and advocates are participating in the Early Learning Days of Action over the next two weeks. In New York State, ten events coordinated by the *Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College* campaign (Winning Beginning NY, Citizen Action of NY, and Alliance for Quality Education) are taking place across the state from May 30-June 14.

In New York State, early childhood advocates say a national focus on early learning builds on the renewed emphasis in New York, where after years of flat funding, lawmakers approved \$25 million in new money to fund new half- and full-day pre-K slots for children in high need districts. This hallmark initiative is the first effort by the state to fund full-day pre-K slots.

“We have known for years that the first few years of life shape a child’s ability to learn for a lifetime,” said **Kate Breslin, President & CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**, who will speak at the event. “Now, President Obama, Governor Cuomo and New York State lawmakers are recognizing the need for increased investment in early childhood

education. Being a part of this national campaign is an important way to raise awareness and keep building momentum for these initiatives.”

"New York has a proud record on early education, with more than 100,000 children now enrolled in Universal Prekindergarten," says **Nancy Kolben, executive director of the Center for Children's Initiatives**. "And this year, New York State made a new investment in full-day pre-K. But we still have less than half the eligible four-year-olds enrolled. The President's plan would help us move ahead on pre-K and other critical early learning services."

President Obama's Early Learning Initiative includes the first federal investment in state pre-k programs, as well as new funding for home visiting, Head Start and Early Head Start, all proven strategies for preparing children for long-term success and offering taxpayers a big return on their investment.

"We know that every \$1 invested in quality pre-K saves \$7 in down the road, which is a terrific return on investment," says **Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education**, who will also speak at the event. "In New York State and around the country, early childhood education is being recognized as a critical piece of any plan to improve education as well as economic development."

The \$7 in savings from the pre-K investment comes from reduced costs in remedial support to fewer children entering the criminal justice system. Research has also shown that students who attend high quality pre-K typically experience higher academic achievement, go on to college and secure higher paying jobs.
