



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committees  
on the SFY 2013–14 Executive Budget  
Elementary and Secondary Education Budget Hearing  
January 29, 2013**

**Submitted by  
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Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**

My name is Kate Breslin and I am President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA). The Schuyler Center is a 141-year-old statewide, nonprofit, policy analysis and advocacy organization working to shape policies that improve health, welfare and human services in New York State.

The Schuyler Center is a founding member of *Winning Beginning NY*, a statewide coalition of about 200 organizations and individuals representing early care and learning programs, parents, and advocates from a range of venues. WBNY focuses its efforts on children from the prenatal period to age 8. The Coalition is actively engaged in policy issues relating to early care and education in New York State.

The Schuyler Center advances policies and practices that strengthen early learning to ensure that students are as successful as possible in school and life.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

**\$25 Million for Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten**

The Schuyler Center applauds the Governor's inclusion of \$25 million investment into full-day Pre-K as a significant next step in expanding access to high-quality early learning and urges the Legislature to support it. The Schuyler Center has been a strong proponent of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) for many years as an essential component of the cradle to career pathway for success in life.

We are extremely appreciative of the Legislature's longstanding and strong support for UPK and the Assembly Speaker's leadership on and commitment to UPK.

The benefits of Pre-K are well known. Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs, including pre-kindergarten, are more likely to find success in school, graduate from high school and earn more over their lifetimes. High-quality pre-kindergarten can improve educational outcomes, reduce disparities and save money. The achievement gap can begin especially early for the nearly **one in four (24.4%) New York State children under age 5 who live in poverty**. The school-readiness gap becomes an achievement gap when children enter school, and this gap can persist over children's school careers. **One out of three children in New York State starts Kindergarten behind in basic skills.**<sup>i</sup>

early childhood program staff understand their achievable goals in the context of the plan and gives parents information about the early learning programs available for their children. The State needs to commit to funding QUALITYstarsNY in an ongoing way.

The New York State Education Department (SED) invested \$4 million in Race to the Top funds toward QUALITYstarsNY to provide a cogent and tested framework for ensuring quality and improving school success in Pre-K and other early learning programs.

Most states that have launched successful Pre-K programs have invested in statewide technical assistance, guidance to local districts, and solid professional development opportunities. New York State has yet to make this targeted and ongoing investment, to ensure that districts have the supports they need to operate programs that will succeed in promoting school readiness for the most at-risk children.

**In addition to investing in access to full-day Pre-K, the State needs an intentional investment in quality rating and improvement.**

## **Conclusion**

We urge the Legislature to support the Governor's proposed investment in full-day pre-kindergarten in high-needs communities. To make the most of this investment in early learning, it is imperative that there be thoughtful investment to ensure high-quality in Pre-K programs. Targeted investment in access to **high-quality early learning**, including Pre-K, has the potential to generate school success, improve accountability, and save public dollars in New York's most at-risk communities.

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<sup>1</sup> QUALITYstarsNY brochure, Early Childhood Advisory Council, New York State Council on Children and Families, [http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/Quality/Resources/ECAC\\_BrochureLowRes.pdf](http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/Quality/Resources/ECAC_BrochureLowRes.pdf)

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