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Human Services Secretary Recognizes Month of the Young Child, Highlights Importance of Early Learning, Investments in Child Care

Harrisburg, PA – In celebration of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Month of the Young Child, Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller today participated in the 14th Annual One Book, Every Child initiative at Keystone Early Learning Center. Month of the Young Child, which began April 1, recognizes what children need to have strong, healthy starts and how early childhood education programs can meet those needs.

"Early education and exposure to literacy is a crucial aspect of a young child's cognitive development," said Secretary Miller. "The Wolf Administration believes that children are the most critical component to the future of Pennsylvania, and that every child should have access to high-quality early learning services. We must pay special attention to our children's needs and how doing something as simple as reading to them can impact their future for the better."

The One Book, Every Child program supports reading and the importance of early literacy. This year's books are *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Fleming and *Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis.

Governor Wolf's proposed 2019-2020 budget includes investments in high-quality early learning programs for Pennsylvania's youngest citizens. The investments include:

- \$15 million in federal funds to reduce the child care subsidy waiting list and enable access to high-quality child care for 970 infants and toddlers;
- \$5 million in state funds and \$1.8 million in federal funds to support a 3 percent rate increase for early intervention programs, allowing providers to stay competitive as they recruit and retain qualified staff to support program enrollment;
- \$10 million in federal funds to provide a 28 percent increase for infant and toddler daily tiered reimbursement rates for STAR 2, 3, and 4 child care providers;
- \$2 million in federal funds to support an apprenticeship model specifically for infant and toddler teachers to achieve their associate degree;
- \$5 million in state funds to allow an additional 800 families to receive evidence-based home visiting services.

Governor Wolf is also proposing a \$74 million increase in child care rates to increase the minimum wage for all Pennsylvania child care workers to \$12 per hour. The wage increase is an important step towards ensuring that wages for early childhood educators are keeping up with growing educational requirements and the cost of living, reducing staff turnover for child care providers, and maintaining a strong child care workforce that give children a strong start that will carry through education and adulthood.

“Child care workers are the reason our economy works. They allow parents to go to work knowing their children are learning and growing in a safe and caring environment,” said Secretary Miller. “Child care is an investment in our children’s futures. We owe the same investment to the people who make their development and education possible.”

Month of the Young Child is celebrated throughout the commonwealth. For more information on events in your area, visit Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children at <https://papromiseforchildren.org/>.

For information on early childhood education services available in Pennsylvania, visit www.dhs.pa.gov or www.findchildcare.pa.gov.

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