

# Report: \$1 investment in early education returns \$1.64 to state

## STUDY SHOWS \$548M NEEDED TO SERVE 63,000 MORE CHILDREN

By Linda B. Blackford

lblackford@herald-leader.com

FRANKFORT — For every \$1 invested in early education in Kentucky, there's a return of \$1.64 in new spending across the state. That's the upshot of a new report from America's Edge, a national business non-profit group that is studying several state economies, including Kentucky's.

"You can't get that investment return anywhere, so we hope that that will resonate with folks across the commonwealth," said Stu Silberman, executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. "Conversely, if we're cutting early childhood, were losing that 64 cents."

Silberman said the Prichard Committee partnered with America's Edge to publicize the report. The group is funded by foundations, corporations and individuals, including the Gates Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Earlier this week, House Democrats proposed cutting money for early childhood education from Gov. Steve Beshear's suggested two-year budget. He had proposed \$36 million in new spending on the state's preschool education for 3- and 4-year-olds, expanding it to more than

**"The very best thing Kentucky can do for its future is build a healthier, more educated workforce and that starts with our children."**

Gov. Steve Beshear, on his proposed budget



Steve Beshear said he will continue to push for funds for early childhood schooling.



Stu Silberman said a cut in early education would hurt the state's economy.

5,000 children; the House version of the budget would add only \$26 million.

"The very best thing Kentucky can do for its future is build a healthier, more educated workforce and that starts with our children," Beshear said Thursday during a Capitol news conference.

The report used an economic modeling system that looks at money spent by workers and businesses when

there are more children in preschool, including indirect costs such as the goods purchased by child care businesses.

The study is of particular concern to Kentucky businesses. Helen Carroll, community relations manager for Toyota, said their biggest problem is "the lack of folks who are prepared to come to work and building our vehicles. Our evaluation of the root cause for the lack of a prepared workforce goes directly to early childhood education."

The report estimates that \$548 million in new early childhood investments are needed in Kentucky to serve an additional 63,000 young children from birth to age 4.

Beshear said he was pleased the House had stuck with most of his proposed budget, and he would not choose between more funding for early childhood or K-12 education:

"Some of the numbers have changed to some degree, those conversations will continue, and I'm going to continue to be a very strong advocate for both the right amount of money to invest and reinvest in early childhood and K-12," he said.

Linda Blackford: (859) 231-1359.  
Twitter: @lblackford