

March 21, 2019

Dear Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick and legislators,

There is a saying in business that “people are our greatest resource.” The same is true for Texas. For our State to meet its full potential, Texans must have access to the tools they need to succeed.

To achieve this, we urge you to support an investment in early childhood education, which specifically includes investments in full-day prekindergarten.

There will be debate about how to best distribute new investments; yet there should be no debate about the proven return on investment from directing those dollars to full-day pre-k and other early literacy strategies. Studies show that in Texas, children who attend effective pre-k programs have already lowered rates of grade repetition and special education, saving the state an estimated \$142 million each year in these two areas alone.

Currently, Texas children are falling behind their peers in other states and countries. Fewer than half of our students read at grade level by the end of third grade, negatively impacting high school graduation rates. According to Forbes, “One of the only things holding Texas back is the education rate among its labor supply. Only 84% of adults have a high school degree, which is second lowest among the states.”

The good news is that research tells us that early childhood education is one of the best investments we can make to change this trajectory. As the School Finance Commission stated, “research shows that children who attend high-quality pre-k programs are more likely to be kindergarten ready, to earn higher scores on third-grade reading and mathematics assessment tests, and ultimately, to graduate from high school on time and enroll in college.”

With school finance reform at the top of the agenda this session, now is the time for Texas leaders to invest in early childhood education, including high-quality, full-day pre-k.

With your support of increased investments in early education, we have the opportunity to develop a new generation of young people who will build businesses, lead communities and contribute to a stronger Texas.

Sincerely,

Bobby Jenkins – President – ABC Home and Commercial Services

John Cullen – Partner – Capstar Partners

Dan Mooney – President & CEO – Classic Jaguar Inc.

Dr. Nolan Perez – CEO – Gastroenterology Consultants of South Texas, PLLC

Charles Butt – Chairman and CEO – HEB

Sandy Dochen – Manager, Corporate Citizenship – IBM

Jim Postl – Retired CEO – Penzoil-Quaker State Co.

Amber Scanlan – Senior Vice President – PNC Bank

Bill Lynch – Vice President, Public Policy – Greater Arlington Chamber of Commerce

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Cleo Rodriguez Jr – President & CEO – Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce  
Dale Petroskey – President & CEO – Dallas Regional Chamber  
David Gerome – President & CEO – El Paso Chamber  
Bill Thornton – President & CEO – Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce  
Alissa Cady – Executive Director – Greater Hewitt Chamber of Commerce  
Bob Harvey – President and CEO – Greater Houston Partnership  
Kelly Hall – CEO – Longview Chamber  
Tara Watson-Watkins – President/CEO – Lufkin/Angelina County Chamber of Commerce  
Lisa Hermes, IOM – President – McKinney Chamber of Commerce  
Richard Perez – CEO – San Antonio Chamber of Commerce  
Tom Mullins – CEO – Tyler Chamber  
Jessica Attas – Vice President, Public Policy – Greater Waco Chamber  
Jason Barany – CEO – Aero Capital Solutions, Inc.  
Geronimo Rodriguez – Chief Advocacy Officer – Ascension Seton  
Jim McBride – Founding Partner – Blue Sage Capital  
Matt Rose – Executive Chairman – BNSF Railway  
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F. Gary Valdez – President – Focus Strategies Investment Banking  
Henry Gonzalez – Partner – Gonzalez Chiscano Angulo & Kasson, PC  
Sandy Gottesman – Gottesman Family Office  
Mike Aviles – Owner – GROW2DAY, LLC  
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Ford Taylor – President & CEO – Wm. Taylor & Co.