



# FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS MICHIGAN

*More than 300 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, Prosecutors, and Crime Victims Dedicated to Preventing Crime and Violence*

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## Michigan Law Enforcement Releases New Report Showing High-Quality Preschool Cuts Crime

***Police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors call for more state investments to reach all kids***

**(Detroit, MI)** — Michigan law enforcement leaders and crime victims today released a new report showing that high-quality preschool cuts crime, and called on the state government to increase investments in quality preschool programs.

The report, prepared by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS MICHIGAN, the state affiliate of a national anti-crime organization of more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and victims of violence, including 330 in Michigan, compiled the most recent research on the crime prevention, as well as educational, economic and cost saving benefits of high-quality preschool programs.

The report features new results from the landmark four-decade long study of the Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti, Mich., which randomly assigned 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families to participate in the high-quality preschool program. The grown-up children who did not attend the program were four times more likely to be arrested for drug felonies and more than twice as likely to become career offenders. The Perry Preschool Program also cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved taxpayers more than \$17 for every \$1 invested, including more than \$11 in crime savings.

At a news conference held at Vistas Nuevas Head Start, the law enforcement officials said that since the state's violent crime rate has exceeded national rates over the past five years, and more than 44,000 juveniles are arrested annually, the state must invest in preschool to prevent crime. The state's violent crime rate was nearly 10 percent higher than the national violent crime rate.

“When government fails to support proven crime-prevention programs like high-quality preschool, it forces police to fight crime with one hand tied behind our backs,” said Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully Cummings. “To make Michigan safe, we must be as willing to guarantee our kids space in a preschool program as we are to guarantee criminals a prison cell.”

Chief Bully Cummings explained that preschool also has many societal benefits. The students enrolled in the Perry Preschool Program were far more likely to have completed high school, to hold a job, to have higher earnings and to own their own homes than similar children who were denied high-quality preschool.

According to the report, *High-Quality Preschool: The Key to Crime Prevention and School Success in Michigan*, without government assistance, three-quarters of 3-year-olds and one-third of 4-year-olds at-risk of school failure in the state are left without access to preschool. Due to inadequate funding, the Michigan School Readiness Program, federally-funded Head Start and special education programs together serve only 52,592 of the estimated 81,000 at-risk 4-year-old children. In addition, another federally-funded program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, helps low-income parents pay for child care. This program is also so inadequately funded that only 50,100 Michigan children, of which approximately 6,500 are 3-year-olds and 6,500 are 4-year-olds, receive assistance.

“Those of us on the front lines know we’ll win a stunning victory over crime when our commitment to putting criminals in jail is matched by our commitment to investing in preschool programs that keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place,” said Ingham County Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth. “We must provide every child with high-quality preschool to ensure all kids get a good start in life.”

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS Vice President Jeff Kirsch shared the educational benefits of preschool. He said that preschool also improves language skills and general knowledge, which is important as the most recent Nation’s Report Card showed children in Michigan lag behind in math and reading. Thirty-six percent of the state’s fourth-graders scored below the basic reading level, and 23 percent scored below the basic math level. A recent study by Georgetown University found that students who attended a public pre-kindergarten program scored higher in tests than similar students who did not attend pre-kindergarten.

Many parents cannot afford high-quality preschool programs on their own. Tuition for a year for a preschool program in Michigan costs \$5,700 annually – more than the average annual tuition at a public university in Michigan.

“Michigan’s most powerful weapon against crime is the investment we make in high-quality preschool programs that teach kids the values and skills to become good citizens instead of criminals,” said Kirsch. “Law enforcement knows that we can reduce crime by investing in kids while they’re in the high chair rather than the electric chair.”

The law enforcement leaders acknowledged that Michigan is moving in the right direction. The state directs nearly \$85 million annually to its state preschool program for 4-year-olds, but still one-third of the at-risk 4-year-olds are without services. Despite the glaring unmet need, state funding for preschool has remained stagnant for the past five years. Law enforcement officials called on state leaders to increase their commitment.

“Michigan has a special opportunity to take a big step forward in crime prevention,” said FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS MICHIGAN state director Kathy Pelleran. “When we know that quality preschool saves lives, money and cuts crime, it’s just common sense to invest now so our most vulnerable children grow into adults who will add to the tax base rather than the tax burden.”

The report and additional information about the benefits of preschool are available at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/MIprek.pdf>.