

Testimony
2014 Joint Legislative Hearing
Elementary and Secondary Education Committee
Craig Apple, Sheriff, Albany County
F. Michael Tucker, President, Center for Economic Growth
Michael Hall, Major General (Ret.), Air Force
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Thank you, Members of the Committee, for giving us the opportunity to testify today.

We are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, America's Edge, and Mission: Readiness—a family of organizations known as Council for a Strong America that leverage the voices of unique and often unexpected messengers in support of proven investments in children.

I am Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple and I am a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, with a membership of more than 260 law enforcement leaders and crime survivors across the State. I am here today to talk about Pre-K and afterschool programs.

We thank policymakers for elevating these issues. Programs have long been underfunded and fail to serve a majority of children. It is time to commit adequate resources to both initiatives and provide access to high-quality programs to all children in this State—especially those most at-risk.

The Pre-K-crime connection is simple: pay now or pay later. We currently spend \$2.8 billion a year on the incarceration of about 66,000 people. A solid investment in Pre-K would lead to better performance in school, fewer high school dropouts and, ultimately, fewer crimes committed and a reduction in the number of prisoners. **While we applaud the Governor for his commitment to universal, full-day, high-quality Pre-K, his proposed \$100M investment for the first year of implementation falls short of our Executive Budget request of \$225M. We ask**

for at least \$225M from the State, to support local districts to add new high-quality, full-day Pre-K seats.

The same holds true for afterschool. A real investment will make a big difference in the lives of thousands of children, who will find stability and skill-building in high-quality programs. **We are asking for an investment of \$9M in a quality infrastructure in 2014-15, in preparation for five years of investment beginning with \$160M in 2015-16.**

That's the key—these programs must be high-quality and we must invest the appropriate resources in them to ensure this. As my colleague Mike Tucker will tell you, businesses understand quality and we must insist on it for our children.

I am Mike Tucker, President of the Center for Economic Growth. I am also a member of America's Edge, a group of 150 business leaders across New York State. As Sheriff Apple said, businesses work hard to provide quality products. And any investment in early learning—whether it's in Pre-K or child care—must ensure the highest quality. If it does not, we not only do our children a disservice, but we will not receive a suitable return on investment.

That return is \$1.86 for every \$1 spent in the early learning sector—more than the revenues from construction (\$1.86), retail trade (\$1.83), manufacturing (\$1.72), transportation (\$1.72) and utilities (\$1.53). And that's money that stays in local communities. I urge you to keep that in mind as you work with your colleagues on economic development strategies across the State.

In addition to early learning, I am here today to talk about business leaders' commitment to models along the education continuum that help students develop the skills needed in the private sector while also increasing student engagement, graduation rates, and enrollment in post-secondary training and education.

Seven in 10 new jobs created in New York between 2008 and 2018 will require some type of formal education beyond high school. Fourteen of the 25 fastest growing occupations in our State will require post-secondary education. We will face a deficit of 350,000 mid-level skilled workers if current education and labor market trends continue.

We believe that in order to close this skills gap, New York State should continue to invest in models that strengthen communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills and promote college- and career-readiness—like the Common Core.

While we agree that implementation has not been perfect, we believe we must stay the course and work to implement these higher standards. We are very willing to lend our expertise to policymakers interested in effective implementation of the Common Core, in order to ensure that children are well-prepared for the challenges and demands of employment in the 21st century.

I know that General Hall can speak to those demands, as well.

Thank you, Mike. I am Major General Mike Hall, a member of Mission: Readiness, retired admirals and generals dedicated to ensuring the success of our young people.

Let me pick up on Mike's remarks about the Common Core first and then circle back to Pre-K.

While there are other major disqualifying factors – including being overweight and having a criminal record –poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans are unable to join the military.¹ Even among those who graduate from high school, in New York, 21 percent of those seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem solving.

For years, each state has had its own particular educational standards and tests to assess student achievement. As a result, there is a lot of confusion about how students are doing. The military has no objective way to compare applicants from different states and has to use its own assessment. Also, for children in military families, frequent moves can be unnecessarily complicated by variations in school standards across different locations, negatively affecting their academic experience. Many non-military children are also mobile and can be negatively affected by this variation: more than 2.5 million children moved out of their home counties in 2011 and at-risk children (poor, those in single-parent families) are more likely to have frequent moves.ⁱⁱ

That is why the Department of Defense Education Activity, along with 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories has adopted the Common Core.

Whether students choose to go into the military or not, they need to be prepared for whatever they do upon graduation. But not having enough young people educationally fit to serve—this is, in fact, a threat to national security.

And they are unprepared for success in school and in life early on—which brings me back to the importance of Pre-K. High-quality early learning programs can help reverse all three of the primary disqualifiers to military service—obesity, criminality, and lack of education. And again, whether they ultimately choose to serve or not, Pre-K helps close the achievement gap and prepares children for productive lives.

On behalf of Sheriff Apple and Mr. Tucker and our collective member organizations, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and look forward to New York State moving forward and providing high-quality educational programs to all children. Our organizations stand in support of the Believe in Children Campaign's budget request, which includes funding for child care, and is attached to our testimony.

ⁱ Gilroy, C. (March 3, 2009). Prepared statement of Dr. Curtis Gilroy, director of accession policy in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness. Before the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee "Recruiting, Retention and End of Strength Overview."

ⁱⁱ Murphey, D., Bandy, T., & Moore, K. A. (2012, January). *Frequent residential mobility and young children's well-being*. Retrieved from: <http://childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2012-02ResidentialMobility.pdf>