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*Hundreds of Police Chiefs,
Sheriffs, District Attorneys, other
Law Enforcement Leaders, and
Violence Survivors Preventing
Crime and Violence*

February 1, 2012

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Oppose proposed Transitional Kindergarten, Preschool and Child Care Budget Cuts

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of 400 California sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime survivors, we know that there is no substitute for tough law enforcement. But we also know from years of crime-fighting experience and rigorous evidence that, to safeguard our communities, we need to take steps to prevent kids from ever becoming involved in crime—such as ensuring children receive a high-quality early education.

The current budget proposal would have a devastating impact on access to high-quality early education in the short term and, in turn, on public safety in the years ahead. Preschool and child care face \$517 million in proposed cuts, beyond the over \$300 million in 2011-2012 cuts that are already being implemented. This would include well over \$100 million in cuts to full-day and half-day state-funded preschool through narrowed eligibility and reduced reimbursement rates.

Additionally, Transitional Kindergarten faces \$224 million in proposed cuts, by the proposed elimination of the program, which was scheduled to be phased for older 4-year-olds in starting in 2012-2013 as an alternative to the practice of enrolling those children in regular kindergarten. This program is intended to significantly expand access to early education. It does not appear that this proposal would even yield the projected budget year savings: while it would reduce the number of students enrolled, in years of declining enrollment school districts can choose to be funded based on the previous year's average daily attendance

Many younger students are not ready for kindergarten and their lack of social, emotional and cognitive development can impede the whole class' progress and set them up for years of falling behind. California has had one of the latest cut-off dates for kindergarten in the nation. Approximately one quarter of California's children start kindergarten before reaching age five.

Research confirms the educational, social and economic benefits of early education for children and families. Children who attend high-quality early care and education programs are better prepared for kindergarten, have stronger language skills in the first years of elementary school and are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school. They are also far less likely to become criminals. Moreover, high-quality early care and education offers one of the highest returns of any public investment, up to \$16 for every dollar invested, by reducing future expenditures for special education, public assistance and the criminal justice system. In the long run, quality early education saves lives and money.

We urge you to reject the proposed cuts to child care, preschool and transitional kindergarten.

Sincerely,

Barrie Becker
State Director

Elizabeth Helmsin
Policy Director