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PRESS RELEASE

STATE BUDGET REINFORCES COMMITMENT TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Columbus, OH — On Tuesday, June 30, 2015, Governor John Kasich reinforced his commitment to high-quality early learning opportunities for young children, signing a state budget that expands access to state subsidized childhood programs while also making a significant investment in Ohio's Step Up to Quality childcare rating system.

"The governor's budget represents a significant investment in early childhood education, the largest increase in support to high-quality early learning opportunities for Ohio's most vulnerable children since the Voinovich administration," said Jason Smith, Executive Director for groundWork, a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization committed to advancing quality early learning and development as the most transformative strategy to improve school outcomes, increase the life-long success of Ohio's children, and lay a strong foundation for economic prosperity in Ohio.

"We applaud Governor Kasich, and legislative champions such as State Senator Peggy Lehner and Representative Cheryl Grossman, for recognizing the importance of investing in high-quality early childhood education. Ohio's childcare subsidy system was designed with the intent of helping low-income working parents get to work and become self-sufficient by providing a safe childcare environment for children while parents work. The research clearly demonstrates that we must provide more than a safe place – children, especially those identified as economically disadvantaged, need language-rich environments with intention teaching to develop the skills need for success in kindergarten, third-grade reading, and beyond. It is critical that we focus on quality of early learning settings because *quality matters*. We thank Governor Kasich and the Ohio General Assembly for recognizing the importance of quality and investing significant state resources to move Ohio's system of early childhood education into the 21st century."

House Bill 64, the state budget, includes \$113 million in new funds for early childhood education over the biennium. The budget investments include an additional \$40 million to serve an additional 6,125 children, bringing the total number of children served to more than 17,000. Additionally, the state budget targets an additional \$40 million to support the goals of Ohio's Step Up To Quality rating system to ensure that more of Ohio's most vulnerable children will have access to childcare and educational opportunities that are affordable and high-quality.

To learn more about groundWork, please visit www.groundworkohio.org

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