FIGHT CRIME: Invest in Kids Tennessee

Over 150 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, District Attorneys General, Law Enforcement Executives, and Violence Survivors Preventing Crime

February 17, 2016

Tennessee General Assembly
600 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Members of the Tennessee General Assembly:

As law enforcement leaders and members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, we want to express our support to maintain current funding levels for Tennessee's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program and strengthen its quality. As police chiefs, sheriffs, and district attorneys general, we are committed to crime prevention strategies. From experience and research, we know investments in high-quality early childhood programs, like Tennessee's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program, are among our best weapons to prevent crime. If we can get our children off to the right start and keep them there through high school graduation, then their likelihood of turning to crime is greatly reduced. We respectfully urge the General Assembly to preserve and strengthen Tennessee's investment in pre-K and support HB1485/SB1899.

Many studies, including a peer-reviewed analysis of 123 studies from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), have evaluated the impact of early childhood education. A common theme has emerged: High quality Pre-K education has a measurable, positive impact on kindergarten readiness and is a predictor of success for students. The evidence is clear that high quality Pre-K can improve at-risk children's success in school and can reduce the number of dropouts. Nationally, some 70 percent of all state prison inmates lack a high school diploma. Children who stay in school and graduate are far less likely to be involved in crime.

The recent Vanderbilt study shows that *without* quality control and best practices, the benefits can be diminished. From the study, some classrooms did have impacts on students' later success. Much can be learned from those classrooms to ensure that all at-risk children receive the benefits Pre-K can deliver. That is why we, as law enforcement leaders, urge you to continue to support the Voluntary Pre-K program and urge increasing the quality of the program. High quality, accessible Pre-K will mean less crime, a better-educated populace and reduced costs to taxpayers. Those of us on the front lines in fighting crime know that prevention works and that early education is one of the best forms of prevention.

Research shows that high-quality early childhood investments significantly decrease a child's likelihood of future involvement in crime. In a study published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, at-risk children left out of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than their peers who had participated in the program. At-risk kids left out of another high-quality program, the High/Scope Perry Preschool, were five times more likely to be chronic offenders with five or more arrests by age 27 than similar children who were in a control group who did not participate in the pre-k program.

Additionally, we fully support the Commissioner of Education's Early Learning Task Force to create a plan to strengthen policies and practices in the Pre-K through 3rd grade continuum across the state. New mechanisms to promote quality throughout these early learning years are essential to ensuring that Tennessee's children maintain and expand the gains that Pre-K provides them.

As leaders in law enforcement, we urge you to preserve and strengthen Tennessee's current investment in Pre-K by supporting HB1485/SB1899 so at-risk children will have a better chance to achieve their potential.

Sincerely,

Marc Coulon
Chief of Police
Ashland City Police Department

Charles Ziegler
Chief of Police
Athens Police Department

Jessie Poole
Chief of Police
Atoka Police Department

Lantz Biles
Chief of Police
Austin Peay State University Police Department

Joshua Ferguson
Chief of Police
Baileyton Police Department

Robert Bennett
Chief of Police
Berry Hill Police Department

Jeff Hughes
Chief of Police
Brentwood Police Departmentartment

John Hogan
Chief of Police
Carthage Police Department

Johnny Stokes
Chief of Police
Charleston Police Department

Rick Scarbrough
Chief of Police
Clinton Police Department

Tim Potts
Chief of Police
Columbia Police Department

Buddy Lewis
Chief of Police
Covington Police Department

Jason Gillespie
Chief of Police
Cumberland City Police Department

Clint Huth
Chief of Police
Dunlap Police Department

Donovan Grayson
Chief of Police
Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis-Memphis Branch

Dustin White
Chief of Police
Halls Police Department

Judy Moore
Chief of Police
Lawrenceburg Police Department

James Paris
Chief of Police
Mason Police Department

James Hambrick
Chief of Police
Mount Juliet Police Department

James Akagi
Chief of Police
Oak Ridge Police Department

Chris Sneed
Chief of Police
Dayton Police Department

Bradley Lindsey
Chief of Police
Dyer Police Department

Donald Bandy
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Gallatin Police Department

James Washam
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Roger Loftin
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Lexington Police Department

Craig Moates
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Jim Harger
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Munford Police Department

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Chief of Police
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Randal Walker
Chief of Police
Dresden Police Department

Art Heun
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Gary Goodwin
Chief of Police
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Jimmy Jeffries
Chief of Police
La Follette Police Department

Randall Bowden
Chief of Police
Lookout Mountain Police Department

Steven Anderson
Chief of Police
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Troy Huffines
Chief of Police
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Darryl Laxton
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Oneida Police Department

Jack Baldwin
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Pigeon Forge Police Department

Timothy Christol
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Red Bank Police Department

Don Myers
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Jan Phillips
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Mike Williams
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David Long
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Jeffery Guth
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Don Brite
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Spring Hill Police Department

David Thompson
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William Sanders
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Paul Blackwell
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Tullahoma Police Department

Danny Greene
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Perry Barfield
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Lue Ida Walls-Upchurch
Chief of Police
University of TN Health Science Center Police Department

August Washington
Chief of Police
Vanderbilt University Police Department

Pat Brady
Chief of Police
White House Police Department

Dennis Young
Chief of Police
Winchester Police Department

Scott Robbins
Director of Public Safety
University of Tennessee - Martin

Glenn Funk
District Attorney General
20th Judicial District Attorney's General Office

Garry Brown
District Attorney General
28th Judicial District Attorney's General Office

Amy Weirich
District Attorney General
30th Judicial District Attorney's General Office

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Russell Johnson
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9th Judicial District Attorney's General Office

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25th Judicial District Attorney's General Office

Paul White
Sheriff
Anderson County Sheriff's Office

Andy Dickson
Sheriff
Carroll County Sheriff's Office

Casey Cox
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Cumberland County Sheriff's Office

Daron Hall
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Davidson County Sheriff's Office

Jeff Bledsoe
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Dickson County Sheriff's Office

Jeff Box
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Dyer County Sheriff's Office

Tim Fuller
Sheriff
Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Melvin Bond
Sheriff
Haywood County Sheriff's Office

Brian Duke
Sheriff
Henderson County Sheriff's Office

Chris Davis
Sheriff
Humphreys County Sheriff's Office

Jimmy Jones
Sheriff
Knox County Sheriff's Office

Bryan Avery
Sheriff
Lake County Sheriff's Office

Murray Blackwelder
Sheriff
Lincoln County Sheriff's Office

Tim Guider
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Loudon County Sheriff's Office

Bucky Rowland
Sheriff
Maury County Sheriff's Office

Joe Guy
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McMinn County Sheriff's Office

Mark Logan
Sheriff
Metro Moore County Sheriff's Office

John Garrett
Sheriff
Overton County Sheriff's Office

Bill Davis
Sheriff
Polk County Sheriff's Office

Robert Arnold
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Ronnie Hitchcock
Sheriff
Sequatchie County Sheriff's Office

Bill Oldham
Sheriff
Shelby County Sheriff's Office

Sonny Weatherford
Sheriff
Sumner County Sheriff's Office

Ric Wilson
Sheriff
Wayne County Sheriff's Office

Jeff Long
Sheriff
Williamson County Sheriff's Office

Robert Bryan
Sheriff
Wilson County Sheriff's Office

cc:
Governor Bill Haslam
Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey
Speaker Beth Harwell
Commissioner Candice McQueen, Tennessee Department of Education
Senator Steven Dickerson
Representative Mark White
House Standing Committee Education Administration and Planning
House Subcommittee Education Administration and Planning
Senate Standing Committee Education
Members of the 109th Tennessee General Assembly