



Improving the lives of children and families in Southeastern PA

Spring-Summer 2018

Happy faces of children trying on their glasses for the first time. Read about PCCY's 8th annual Give Kids Sight Day. (Page 2)

STUDENTS LEAD AT MARCH FOR OUR LIVES

Our hearts were broken this Valentine's Day when a tragically ill young man entered a Parkland high school with the intent to kill. Fourteen teenagers and three staff lost their lives and scores of others lives will never be the same after witnessing the horror; yet the shooting happened in one of the safest schools in Florida that had two armed officers on school grounds.



Philadelphia-area students arrive in D.C. to represent the region at March For Our Lives.

School shootings are sadly now a regular occurrence in this country, but the powerful response of the surviving students at

Stoneman Douglas High School galvanized the nation to take action to make schools safer and reduce gun violence, culminating in a national day of action: March For Our Lives.

In addition to participating in Philadelphia's March, PCCY sponsored three buses to take students and advocates to Washington on March 24, including a youth bus comprised of students from SLA at Beeber (who also raised money for the trip), South Philadelphia High School, and eight members of Girl Scouts of Eastern PA Troop 9999.

Our generous donors, Steve and Barbara Gold, Judy Pote, Hillman Family Foundation, Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, and the dozens of individuals who gave money, made sure that these students could be counted among the thousands in D.C.



HUGE CHILD CARE WIN, YEARS IN THE MAKING

Doom and gloom may be the appropriate tone for news coverage of the political scene these days, but when the federal government steps up and increases child care funding by a stunning 55%, you'd expect the novelty of good news would catapult the story to the front page. But the striking act of bipartisan unity barely made a ripple.

Maybe it seemed too good to be true.

Fortunately, the major investment is as real as the benefits it will bring, thanks to the tireless work of key lawmakers, advocates, and passionate parents who wouldn't take no for an answer.

The federal child care funds, part of a broader federal spending package announced in March 2018, will boost the quality of child care and subsidize the cost of child care for working parents. In PA, as many as 10,000 more children will be added to our high quality early learning programs. That means that thousands of working parents can go to their jobs confident that their children are safe and learning!

Considering that the President's proposed budget slashed important support for kids, new child care investments seemed improbable, if not outright impossible.

But, before Donald Trump won the election there was a window of opportunity to push for



(L-R) PCCY's Donna Cooper, House Democrat Leader Nancy Pelosi, Mayor Jim Kenney, then-State Rep Dwight Evans, Governor Tom Wolf at the historic meeting of all levels of government on pre-K.

kids once both candidates for President remarked on the need for quality child care.

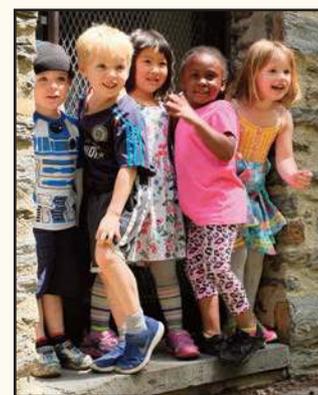
So PCCY assembled the most powerful folks we could to rally behind more federal funds for child care, including House Democrat Leader Nancy Pelosi, Governor Tom Wolf, Mayor Jim Kenney, then -State Representative Dwight Evans and former Republican Lt. Governor Jim Cawley.

Like many historic meetings held in Philadelphia, this meeting mattered. It hit home, in a big way, evidenced by the dramatic findings of the poll showing that an overwhelming majority of both Republicans and Democrats back pre-K as a priority for the new president.

Pennsylvanians have been fighting for quality early learning programs for many years under the Pre-K for PA banner, a coalition led by PCCY and key allies. The campaign's wins are trending upward. Once again, Governor Wolf proposed \$40M in new state funding for early learning in his budget address this year, which will give 5,000 more kids access to quality pre-K thanks to the coalition.

The massive investment is proof positive that advocacy works and progress on issues that we are undeniably united over are inevitable, regardless of how toxic the nation's politics become. Clearly, much more work lies ahead but we caught a glimpse of the political will of U.S. lawmakers in March. Our work will continue until child care becomes a permanent part of the political landscape in Washington.

Contact Neli for more information: 215-563-5848 x18.



Preschoolers at play in West Philadelphia's Parent Infant Center, a high quality pre-K center.

WATCHING OUT FOR STUDENTS IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Pro-charter national think tanks find that Pennsylvania's charter school law is among the worst, and so do we. That's why PCCY produced two reports on charter schools this winter that provide evidence for the urgently needed reforms to PA's outdated charter school law.

The dramatic growth of charter schools in the Commonwealth over the past 20 years has been accompanied by a growing number of issues regarding their funding and effectiveness.

In *Uncharted Territory: Implications of Rising Charter Enrollment in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Suburbs*, we found that charter school enrollment and costs have grown in the suburbs, but academic and fiscal performance haven't followed suit.

Findings include:

- Charter school enrollment and costs grow every year in the southeast Pennsylvania suburbs
- Half of the suburban brick and mortar charter schools, and all of the cyber charter schools, score lower on state standardized tests than southeast school districts with similar shares of disadvantaged students
- The charter school funding mechanism results in overpayments to cyber charters and to nearly every charter school for special education



K-12 advocate Doug Carney (left) discusses the impact of rising charter school costs with Penn Wood junior Charlene Canning (center), as PCCY's Policy Researcher David Loeb looks on.

- Charter schools tend to spend more on administration and have higher fund balances than traditional public schools
- As the charter schools are growing in cost and enrollment, coupled with a mixed bag of performance, *Uncharted Territory* points to the state's outdated and weak charter school law as the cause.

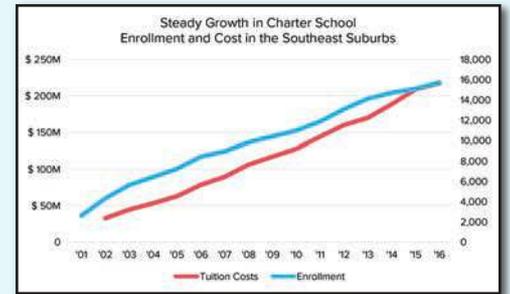
To address the key elements of the byzantine charter payment system, the state should:

- Re-instate the charter reimbursement line in the state education budget; Set the amount high enough to cover each districts' stranded costs
- Adopt a standardized cyber charter tuition payment
- Apply the state's public school special education funding formula to charter schools
- Cap charter school fund balances at a level consistent with the cap for school districts

Additionally, PCCY's report, *Expanding High Quality Charter School Options*, focused on provisions missing from the law that would produce a charter sector with strong academics. The report provided a 21-point checklist to ensure effective reforms to the state charter school law, so that only high quality applicants are approved, high quality charters can grow, and failing charter schools are closed.

Find both reports at www.pccy.org/education.

Contact Tomea for more information: 215-563-5848 x36



Highlighting the unchecked rise of charter school enrolment and accompanying costs to districts underscore the need for greater oversight.

1,200 CHILDREN SEE A BRIGHTER FUTURE

PCCY's 8th annual Give Kids Sight Day provided free eye screenings to children from Philadelphia and surrounding counties. 1,200 children received a free eye screening and, if they needed them, two free pairs of glasses. This event was particularly targeted at children who were uninsured, or underinsured, and who have not had or passed eye screening.



Congressional visit at Sight Day an "eye-opener." (L-R) Health Policy Director Colleen McCauley (PCCY), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R), Donna Cooper (PCCY), Rep. Dwight Evans (R).

Thanks to our partners Wills Eye Hospital, Eagles Charitable Foundation, and Essilor Vision Foundation, 650 children received the glasses they need to thrive.

Congressmen Dwight Evans (D) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R) came to the bustling Sight Day campus and were shocked by the degree to which the current state of health care in the country fails so many children.

"It was an eye-opening morning," said Congressman Fitzpatrick. "The turnout speaks to a great and sadly unmet need for vital health services for children."

The Members of Congress spoke with Wills Eye Hospital's Chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology, Dr. Alex Levin, about their outreach efforts and their enduring commitment to the region's children. Previously in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Ophthalmology*, Dr. Levin documented the powerful impact that Sight Day has on the children served.

"We know we're lagging behind other wealthy nations when it comes to health care," said Congressman Evans, "but to see over a thousand children waiting in line to see an eye doctor is just shameful."

Following their Sight Day visit, both Congressmen began work on supplemental dental-only and vision-only CHIP coverage for those children whose parents' insurance fail to provide such vital care.

Contact Colleen for more information: 215-563-5848 x33.



Media personalities Mina SayWhat (left) and Patty Jackson (right) flank Wills Eye Hospital's Dr. Alex Levin at Sight Day, where 1,200 children had their eyes checked.

UNTIL ALL CHILDREN ARE SAFE FROM LEAD

Parents are vigilant when it comes to their children. But there's only so much you can do against an ever-present threat you don't know is even there.

In some neighborhoods in Philadelphia, it's in the dirt where children play, a lingering legacy of long-shuttered industrial plants.

In this region last year, the number of children poisoned by lead (the effects of which span a lifetime) was double the number of opioid-related deaths.

Are we doing enough to protect children? Any gut-check should tell you the answer is no and will always be no until our neighborhoods are lead-free.

So here's what we did.

PCCY convened the first Philly Lead Poisoning Summit, launching a new coalition to get lead hazards out of children's homes so they are never poisoned in the first place. The summit was a continuation of PCCY's efforts, which included leading the fight to enact the 2011 Lead Paint Disclosure Law. The law requires landlords with properties built before 1978 to be lead safe if a young child will be living there.

At PCCY's recommendation, Mayor Kenney assembled the Advisory Group on Lead Poisoning, of which PCCY is a member, rekindling the citywide effort to eliminate this entirely preventable health condition that first injures children when they are toddlers. The Advisory Group identified a set of recommendations to further strengthen prevention efforts in the city including expansion of the law to require all rental units built before 1978 to be lead free.

There are no treatments for the tragic consequences of childhood lead poisoning, but we know lead-free homes would have prevented nearly all of the over 2,200 cases reported last year. Now the fight turns to City Council to broaden the ordinance and we will continue to remind members of council of the urgent action this crisis demands.

Contact Colleen for more information: 215-563-5848 x33.



NEW TECH GRANTS TARGET STEM LEARNING

What do you get when you combine a brilliant, real-life hero of World War II, a fictional super-heroine from one of the highest grossing films ever, and hundreds of fundraising gamers at last year's Minecraft event?

Brand new opportunities for tech learning in public schools!

In an effort to boost STEM learning and to bring hi-tech learning into classrooms, PCCY launched its inaugural search for grant applicants this spring. The PCCY Turing Tech Grants Project aims to improve technology education for students in grades K-8 by providing grants of up to \$3,000 to Philadelphia public schools so that teachers will have the tools they need to facilitate coding and robotics training.

Taking inspiration from blockbuster film and cultural touchstone Black Panther, PCCY will award an additional \$250 to schools that make boosting the coding skills of girls a priority with the Shuri Prize, named after the eponymous superhero's genius sister—a hero in her own right.

The tech grants, named after mathematician, cryptographer, and founder of computer science Alan Turing, are funded by proceeds from PCCY's Minecraft gaming tournament and STEM festival, the Block By Block Party, which took place last September.

For the past fifteen years, PCCY's much-lauded Picasso Project has distributed mini-grants for innovative art projects and offered quality arts

learning for students in need. PCCY is now replicating the success of our award-winning art grant program to champion scientific innovation and to further advance the national priority in STEM education.

This year's Minecraft event is scheduled to take place October 6th where we hope to raise even more funds to grow the Turing prize pool and help to inspire the next generation of the city's STEM leaders.

Contact David for more information: 215-563-5848 x23



PCCY's Block By Block Party engaged kids with a Minecraft marathon, STEM festival, and numerous popular activities, including a coding workshop hosted by Coded By Kids.

FIGHT FOR FAIR FUNDING CONTINUES

This year, Governor Wolf affirmed his commitment to Pennsylvania's 2.6 million children with his budget proposal of an additional \$130M in new K-12 funding. Given the needs of our schools, this conservative down payment is welcome but clearly more must be done to address the dire conditions of schools, where most of the state's students are educated.

The new funding will also mean the slash-and-burn cuts of the Corbett administration will finally be restored this year.

The shortage of funds had its day in court when the lawsuit on the matter, William Penn vs. the Commonwealth, took another step forward in the Commonwealth Court. The court heard objections filed by PA House and Senate Majority Leaders Turzai and Scarnati.

Among other bizarre assertions, the legislative leaders argued that the right to an education did not exist and that if districts are underfunded, kids aren't harmed and districts share a part of the blame because they can choose how to allocate resources.

Legislators stood alone with those assertions.

Particularly appalling? While voters (and legislators, for that matter) know full well the State's track record for underfunding schools and are well past the point of arguing that funding matters, the lawyer representing State Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R-25) offered a tone-deaf response to poor education results in Pennsylvania: He blames the kids.



Citing a 2000 case from North Carolina, "after all, the fact that a student does not pass a standardized test or is unprepared to compete in the workplace may not be due to school officials' actions, but rather to the student's intellectual ability, lack of self-discipline, lack of parental support or other social or environmental factors."

First of all, voters have consistently and correctly pointed the finger of blame at irresponsible legislators and their collective failure to adequately fund education, not at school officials.

Secondly, if it were one student struggling, that would be one thing. But only 61% of students passed English and only 42% passed math in the 2017 PSSAs.

That's thousands more than a one student case. In fact, that's 428,865 students that failed math. And the state is constitutionally responsible for all of them.

The fact that these issues must be argued before a court of law to be resolved speaks volumes to the problems with how education is funded in the state of Pennsylvania. Hopefully it's just a matter of time before legislators hear from enough voters that we object to their burning tax dollars in court costs.

Join the Campaign for Fair Education Funding and make your voice heard today.

Contact Tomea for more information: 215-563-5848 x36

ARTS ED ADVOCACY YOU CAN SEE

Mayor Jim Kenney, Superintendent Dr. William Hite, council members, teachers, students, and philanthropists joined PCCY for the 2018 Picasso Project Awards at City Hall, a celebration of one of the largest arts programs supporting the district.

The ceremony included the announcement of \$65,000 in strategic arts grants and featured key speakers including the Mayor, Dr. Hite, Council Members Derek Green, Helen Gym, and Mark Squilla.

Winning schools were awarded grants up to \$5,000 to fund an array of arts projects ranging from community murals to a theatrical performance of "Little Shop of Horrors." At the award ceremony, speakers highlighted the profound value of arts in schools, including Mayor Kenney who remarked, "Arts education is a vital component of every child's growth and well-being." The award ceremony included live ensemble performances from grantees at City Hall.

PCCY's Picasso Project, which has inspired more than 40,000 students over the past 15 years through partnerships with 243 arts and community organizations, presented awards to a total of 14 school projects and continues to spearhead innovative arts education across Philadelphia.

Contact Tim for more information: 215-563-5848 x22.



Artists at work! Picasso Project grant winners Barton Elementary's "All Are Welcome Here" mosaic is coming together.

ANNUAL PARTY



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