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EARLY EDUCATION THE FIRST RUNG IN STRICKLAND'S EDUCATION LADDER

Strickland Says Early Care and Education is Part of Economic Development Strategy for State

COLUMBUS—February 2, 2009—In his executive budget released today, Governor Strickland emphasized the importance of early care and education as the first step in Ohio's education system, saying that education starts at birth and every child must be given a fair start. The Governor also noted that investment in early childhood development is "the most efficient economic development strategy available". The plan outlines Strickland's focus on addressing all of the facets of early childhood development, including early education, health care, and family supports.

In addition to the implementation of mandatory full-day kindergarten for every child in Ohio, the Governor recommended establishing The Center for Early Childhood Development within the Department of Education. The Center will create a single regulatory process for all early care and education programs and increase licensing and professional development requirements for child care lead teachers.

"Governor Strickland's proposal released today is a huge step forward for Ohio's early childhood system," said Katie Kelly, groundWork Director. "Creating a comprehensive, efficient, and high-quality early care and education system is one of the best investments that Ohio can make."

Early care and education issues received resounding bi-partisan support during the last budget process, receiving more than \$270 million in new investments.

Research shows that children that have access to high quality early care and education and health care are more successful in the K-12 system, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are more likely to become productive members of the workforce. Governor Strickland's plan would link his reforms in the K-12 system and higher education to these important early years.

groundWork is a coalition early care and education leaders, parents, service professionals, business leaders, and organizations across the state who have come together to promote state investments and policies that will address the needs of Ohio's youngest children, including voluntary access to high-quality early care and education programs, assessment, screening, and treatment for social and emotional problems, increased access to health services and supports, and voluntary access to full-day kindergarten.

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

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