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**CONTACT:**

**Lynea Hansen**

**[\(303\) 579-8794](tel:3035798794)**

**[Lynea@LyneaHansen.com](mailto:Lynea@LyneaHansen.com)**

## **Mayor Hancock and Early Childhood Leaders Propose Renewal of Denver Preschool Program**

**DENVER** – Mayor Michael B. Hancock, City Councilman Albus Brooks and early childhood education leaders today announced the Denver Preschool Program will be asking the Denver City Council to refer a question to the November ballot to reauthorize and expand the Denver Preschool Program (DPP). Voters initially approved a dedicated sales tax increase in 2006 to create the DPP and improve access to quality preschools for all of Denver’s 4-year-olds.

“The Denver Preschool Program has proven that high quality early childhood education helps prepare Denver’s youngest students, no matter where they live or what color their skin, to enter kindergarten ready to learn,” Mayor Hancock said. “The achievement gap starts even before kindergarten. In order to best prepare all of our children to compete and succeed in the 21st century economy, they must be afforded a smart start in life – and that means making preschool accessible for all of Denver’s youngest students.”

Councilman Brooks will join civic leaders **Mike Yankovich, president of the Denver Children’s Museum, and Mario Carrera, Chief Revenue Officer for Entravision Communications Corp.,** as chairs of the campaign committee, which will be called “Preschool Matters.”

**“Our Children are Denver's future and number one asset,” said District 8 City Councilman Albus Brooks, who serves on the DPP’s governing board. “I am a proud DPP parent, who has witnessed its success first hand.”**

The proposed ballot measure will ask voters to reauthorize the .12 percent sales tax that was initially approved in 2006 and to also increase the tax .03 percentage points in order to:

- Restore year-round preschool cuts suffered during the recession;
- Meet the growing demand for full- and extended-day programming; and
- Keep up with rising tuition costs.

“It costs much more to help a failing 14-year-old catch up in reading or math than to give a 4-year-old a strong start,” said Theresa Peña, chair of the DPP Board of Directors and former President of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education. “Children with DPP experience show better literacy and math skills than their peers in Denver Public Schools from kindergarten through third grade.”

Nearly three-quarters of Denver’s 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool – one of the highest enrollments in the country. The DPP served 81 percent of these children during the last school year. More than 34,000 children have been served since the program started.

An independent study last year showed 64 percent of third-graders who participated in the DPP posted advanced or proficient reading scores compared to 58 percent of non-DPP students. Participation in the DPP also was shown to reduce the proportion of unsatisfactory reading scores by 6 percentage points. These gains occurred despite the demographic profile of DPP graduates that puts them at slightly greater risk of school failure.

“Denver has led the way in raising the bar on preschool quality,” said Jennifer Landrum, president and CEO of the Denver Preschool Program. “Our investments in measuring and improving preschools benefits students across all classrooms, regardless of whether they are enrolled in DPP.”

Tuition support, which is scaled to income and the quality of school attended, accounted for 75 percent of the \$11.8 million of 2013 revenues. More than half of families served earn less than \$30,000 a year.

When DDP started, only 52 preschools were rated as a quality program. Today, more than 252 preschools have raised their rating to be a quality program. Nearly 90 percent of students attended top quality schools during the 2013-14 school year.

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