

January 30, 2014

Professional Staff Congress endorses UPK NYC campaign

Whereas, there is broad consensus among educators and academic evaluators that providing full-day quality pre-kindergarten improves children's chance of successfully completing high school and college;

Whereas, Mayor Bill de Blasio's universal pre-kindergarten plan is widely supported by New York City residents as indicated by numerous polls before and after the election and by a growing number of community-based organizations, labor unions, children's advocates, businesses, social service providers and faith-based organizations, who have formed the UPK NYC campaign to lobby the Legislature and Governor to pass the city's home rule legislation;

Whereas, New York passed legislation in 1997 that promised to make universal pre-kindergarten available to all four-year olds within four years, today only a quarter of all school districts are able to offer the program because the state did not provide adequate funding; moreover, the funding the state did make available is provided only for half-day pre-kindergarten classes, which do not meet the needs of working parents;

Whereas, raising income taxes 0.5% on wealthy New Yorkers with earnings more than \$500,000 to fund universal quality pre-kindergarten and after-school programs for public middle school students was a central plank of Mayor Bill de Blasio's campaign for mayor, an election he won by a large majority;

Whereas, Governor Andrew Cuomo proposes phasing in universal pre-kindergarten statewide within five years, he dedicates only \$100 million in his FY 2015 budget proposal for New York City—far less than the \$340 million needed—and opposes home rule legislation granting New York City the ability to raise city income taxes on the wealthy for this purpose;

Whereas the Professional Staff Congress endorsed Bill de Blasio for Mayor in May 2013 in large part because of his commitment to improving educational opportunity for city residents, including making quality pre-kindergarten and after-school programs available to all city children, and dramatically increasing City investments in CUNY;

Whereas PSC members, as educators and advocates for education, strongly support expanding quality educational opportunity for all children, and recognize that quality pre-kindergarten education is a critical foundation for individuals' educational success and for combatting economic inequality in the broader society:

Whereas, working parents, including PSC members, pay as much as \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually for full-day pre-kindergarten and \$3,000 to \$5,000 for after-school programs for their middle school children;

Whereas, providing universal, quality pre-kindergarten and after-school programs to middle school students will immediately relieve financial pressure on working parents and free personal resources that can be used to support their families;

Whereas, the majority of the city's teaching workforce is educated at CUNY, and CUNY is well prepared to train the additional early childhood certified teachers who will be needed;

Therefore be it resolved, that the Professional Staff Congress will lend its support to win home rule legislation in Albany allowing New York City to raise income taxes for this purpose; and

Be it further resolved, that the Professional Staff Congress endorses the UPK NYC campaign, will provide financial support, pledge to mobilize our members and students, and contribute as called upon to assure the campaign's success.