



# FSSA News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## FSSA Secretary testifies in support of pre-kindergarten

INDIANAPOLIS (March 8, 2017) – Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) Secretary Dr. Jennifer Walthall today presented research on the immediate and long-term benefits of early childhood education programs during testimony in support of Gov. Holcomb’s proposal to expand pre-kindergarten.

Highlights of Dr. Walthall’s remarks to the Senate Education and Career Development Committee include:

- National research tells us 90 percent of a child’s brain development occurs before age 5, and this brain development is not solely based on genetic hardwiring. It also depends on the child’s environment and the responsiveness of parents, caregivers and teachers.
- Despite entering their programs in the fall with lower skill levels, children in *On My Way Pre-K* gained skills from fall to spring at a higher rate than their peers. These gains included several key aspects of school readiness: language comprehension, early literacy, executive functioning and a reduction in behavior problems in the classroom.

Secretary Walthall’s full testimony is attached.

“I fully support Gov. Holcomb’s call to double the state’s investment in pre-K,” Secretary Walthall said. “We know children who get off to a strong start are far more likely to achieve academic success. As a pediatric emergency physician, I know that building a foundation for educational, social and emotional development is key to ensuring children become well-rounded adults.”

### **Contact Information:**

#### **FSSA**

Marni Lemons

317-234-5287

[Marni.Lemons@fssa.IN.gov](mailto:Marni.Lemons@fssa.IN.gov)

**Gov. Holcomb’s Office**

Stephanie Wilson

317-914-9137

[StepWilson@gov.IN.gov](mailto:StepWilson@gov.IN.gov)