

Governor Mike Pence
HEA 1004 Bill Signing
March 27, 2014

Thank you Pastor Bolling, thank you for your very warm introduction. It is such a joy to be here at Daystar Childcare Ministry. This is a ministry that provides high quality, low cost early childhood education for many of our neighbors in greatest need, and judging from the talent in that choir they are doing a brilliant job.

I am privileged to join you today and to be joined by some of the most distinguished and consequential leaders in state government today. I'm honored to not only be with Pastor Bolling, and other civic leaders here, but I am especially grateful to have speaker Brian Bosma here with us, Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane, House Minority Leader Scott Pelath, the author of this legislation Representative Bob Behning, Representative Justin Moed, Representative Dan Forestal, Representative Sharon Negele, Senator Jim Merritt, and representing the Indiana Department of Education's Superintendent, John Barnes. Thank you all for being here today and for bringing us to this point.

It is my great privilege as the Governor of the State of Indiana to share with all of you what I believe is a truly special moment in the life of our state. It is a moment where we begin a new chapter of hope and opportunity in the lives of some of our most vulnerable children as Indiana for the first time ever will fund quality Pre-K education so low-income kids can start school ready to learn. Here in Indiana we want kids to have the same opportunities on a widening basis, much like the success and opportunities that Daystar has helped to provide in this community for more than 15 years. Because of the strong support of leaders who are gathered around me today, and the overwhelming support of members of both parties in the Indiana General Assembly, and of leaders around this community so well represented here today by United Way of Central Indiana, companies like Cummins Engine Company, and the Indy Chamber, I can testify to the fact that leadership from South Bend and Elkhart to Evansville have impacted this policy and have brought us to this point.

Now, I do believe that when it comes to our most at-risk kids, early learning programs can and do make a difference between a lifetime of success and lifetime of falling behind, dropping back, and sometimes dropping out. Last year, the Indiana General Assembly expanded educational opportunities to low income kids, but in December we announced our intention to seek Pre-K opportunities for Hoosiers most disadvantaged children. At that time Indiana was the only state in the Midwest and just one of nine states in the nation that did not provide state funding for Pre-K education, and today for the first time ever, with my signature today, we'll change that forever in the state of Indiana.

I'll always believe that best pre-K program is a prosperous family that's able to provide the kind of enrichment in the home that every child needs and deserves. It became apparent to me over the last year, traveling all across the state of Indiana meeting with leaders in our capital city and the four corners of the state that's just not the case for too many Indiana kids. Now I believe every Indiana child deserves to start kindergarten ready to learn and to begin a lifetime of learning that will last throughout their K-12 experience and on into their careers. The step we take today will help to facilitate that.

The legislation that we will sign today, House Enrolled Act 1004 includes the first ever funding for pre-Kindergarten education in the state of Indiana. The bill provides funding for the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration to administer a five county voluntary early education grant program that will allow several thousand Hoosier children from low-income homes to attend the public or private pre-Kindergarten program of their choice. This legislation also, in real Hoosier tradition, initiates a comprehensive early learning and pre-K study committee to examine future opportunities and challenges for pre-K education in the state of Indiana. I am grateful to have the opportunity to sign it into law today.

In moments like this it's important that we give credit where credit is due, and let me just take a particular moment to extend my appreciation to legislative leaders for the bipartisan support that brought us to this moment today because it was truly a bipartisan effort. From the very outset of this last session of the General Assembly I was deeply moved by the interest, desire and passion of Republican and Democrat leaders of the House and the Senate to set politics aside and move forward with this important legislation. It was authored by Representative Bob Behning who has a heart for children in this state like none other. Representative Behning I thank you and congratulate you on another success.

This is not a new idea in Indiana. It was actually first promulgated in the Indiana House of Representatives now nearly four years ago. I want to give credit where credit is due, he is a big man with a bigger heart, Speaker Brian Bosma brought pre-K education into the debate in Indiana and his leadership brought us here. I want to thank several other members who are here, particularly the leadership of the Democratic Party in the House and in the Senate. Representative Scott Pelath from very early on spoke to me from his heart about a desire to set politics aside and when this bill moved in its early versions, to see the Democratic House Minority Leader and his caucus stand shoulder to shoulder with Republicans on behalf of our most vulnerable kids was deeply moving to me. Leader Pelath, the people of Indiana and the families of Indiana are in your debt. Thank you.

I am profoundly grateful for the leadership in the Indiana State Senate, to Senator David Long and others who helped move this legislation forward. Allow me to say how grateful I am as well for the leadership of the Democrat Leader of the Indiana State Senate. Senator Tim Lanane

placed quality pre-K education funding as one of the top priorities of his caucus in this session of the General Assembly, and from very early on he set politics aside, he put kids first. Senator Tim Lanane, thank you for being so instrumental in moving this pre-K legislation into law today.

Senator Jim Merritt, Representative Justin Moed, and others, we thank you for your leadership and your strong support, and your friendship not to us and to our administration so much as to the families of Indiana. Thanks should also go to business and civic leaders and non-profit organizations across the state of Indiana who have called for and spoken about the importance of Indiana joining the cause of quality pre-K education for our most disadvantaged children. I have named a few but these people know who they are, and let me assure you the people of Indiana are in debt to the compassion of the business and nonprofit organizations who called for pre-K education in this state over the last several years. Thank you all.

From the bottom of my heart I truly believe the credit for today belongs not only to those in public and in private life whose insistent vision brought us here today, but I believe that today, in the overwhelming bipartisan support that brought us to this moment, is just one more example of the heart of the people of Indiana. We serve a compassionate, generous, kind people in all 92 counties of this state and so to them we say thank you. Thank you for generations in Indiana for believing that we ought to be a people that don't suffer the little ones to come unto us, all who have cherished for so many years, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven. It's to the heart and compassion of the people of Indiana that this day truly belongs.

To all of them to all the leaders that have gathered in public and in private life, to Pastor Mike Bolling of Daystar Childcare Ministries and all the ministries that will benefit from this it is my high honor and my great privilege as Governor of the State of Indiana to take this important step of providing pre-K education to our most vulnerable children, and we'll go about that now.

Thank you very much, God bless you.