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Early education can make all the difference

March 10, 2010

With the tough economy taking its toll on the state budget, I consider it tragic that Pennsylvania must spend as much as it does for the prison system. Under the governor's proposed budget for 2010-11, the Department of Corrections' allocation is slated to increase by \$136 million (an almost 8 percent increase). This is on top of a \$171 million increase for the current budget year and hundreds of millions spent to construct two new state prisons.

Yes, violent offenders must be locked away. However, I believe we must be just as compelled to invest in preventing criminal behavior as we are to punish it after the fact with an expensive prison cell.

Education -- specifically early childhood education -- has been proven to be the starting point of a successful trajectory for an at-risk child. Research is clear that at-risk children, who benefit from quality early education programs enter school ready to learn, do well, graduate on time and get good jobs -- while avoiding the pitfalls of juvenile crime and violence that would make them a drain on our government and economy.

As we endure the costs of our prison system today, I hope legislators will continue investing today in the state's early learning continuum, including Pre-K Counts, Head Start and Child Care Works, to reduce the cost of that prison system tomorrow.

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The writer is Allentown chief of police.

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(Energy Rate Cap)

HOUSE BILL No. 1509
ELECTRICITY GENERATION CUSTOMER
CHOICE AND COMPETITION ACT.

Chapter 28, § 2806 : AS OF
JANUARY 1, 2001, CONSISTENT WITH THE
COMMISSION'S DISCRETION UNDER THIS
SECTION, ALL CUSTOMERS OF ELECTRIC
DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES IN THIS
COMMONWEALTH SHALL HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE ELECTRICITY
FROM THEIR CHOICE OF ELECTRIC
GENERATION SUPPLIERS. THE ULTIMATE
CHOICE OF THE ELECTRIC GENERATION
SUPPLIER IS TO REST WITH THE CONSUMER.