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## Oregon Law Enforcement and Business Leaders Call on Lawmakers to Increase Federal Funding for Head Start

Attorney General Hardy Myers, Oregon law enforcement leaders and a representative of the business community released a report recently that shows Head Start not only prepares children to succeed in school, it also prevents crime, saves Oregon taxpayers money and is good for the economy. The report calls for increased investments to expand access to Head Start and improve the quality of programs. Providing Head Start with improved quality standards to all eligible Oregon children can generate tax savings of \$200 for every Oregon household, according to the report. The savings will come from lower crime, special education and welfare costs plus increased tax revenue from higher earnings of adults who attended Head Start as kids. Both state and federal funds support Head Start in Oregon. With an increase in state support already in Gov. Ted Kulongoski's proposed budget, the event focused on the need for increasing federal funding to serve all children from low-income families who are eligible under federal guidelines and to improve the quality of Head Start programs. The report, "Investing in Oregon Head Start Saves Money," shows that 40 percent, or 6,400, eligible Oregon children are not served due to inadequate federal funding. The report was prepared by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON, a bipartisan, anti-crime organization of 137 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and violence survivors. Myers, Marion County District Attorney Walt Beglau, Keizer Chief of Police H. Marc Adams and John Baker, principle broker of Ned Baker Real Estate, Inc., released the report at a news conference at the Hawthorne Head Start Center. Martha Brooks, state director of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON, also participated in the news conference. A 2005 Zogby poll of U.S. business leaders found that more than 80 percent agree investments in effective preschool programs "like Head Start" would help the United States remain competitive with other countries and improve the quality of our workforce and our long-term economic outlook. Currently, Oregon's unemployment rate is 20 percent higher than the national average and the state recently reported that 27 of Oregon's 36 counties were classified as distressed or severely distressed areas. Oregon's average personal income is also lower than the nation's at \$30,561 compared to \$33,041. "As a businessman, I would always invest in an opportunity that returned 10 times the initial investment," said Baker. "That is why programs such as Head Start are essential to a prosperous Oregon future." "Head Start is the smartest investment our country can make in our youngest at-risk children," said Myers. "When Oregon's members of Congress give all eligible children the opportunity to attend Head Start, every Oregonian benefits. The possibility of \$200 in savings per household would help the state fill the gaps in other programs that are also critical to our state." The report calculates that if all eligible children received Head Start, over the long term Oregonians will save \$500 million per year. Of that total, \$300 million will be in reduced government expenses and increased tax revenue. "When the savings from Head Start would let every student attend the University of Oregon or Oregon State University for free, it is just common sense to increase investment in the program," said Beglau. "Oregon's law enforcement leaders call on our Congressional delegation to ensure every eligible child can enroll in Head Start so Oregonians can roll up the tax savings." Adams cited research from the landmark study of the Perry Preschool program in Michigan that has tracked a population of at-risk kids through age 40. Half of the kids attended the Perry Preschool and half did not. At age 27, the at-risk kids who were left out of the program were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers as adults than the kids who were enrolled. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON analyzed the research and found that if Head Start were available to all at-risk 3- and 4-year-old Oregonian children, the state could prevent 500 kids each year from growing up to become criminals. "Oregonians know a good deal when they see it," said Adams. "Head Start helps Oregon be tough on crime and easy on the wallet." Head Start programs are generally of higher quality than other early care and education programs but there's room for improvement, the report said. The number of teachers with four-year college degrees needs to increase. More parent coaching and interventions for children with

behavioral problems also are needed. Curriculum standards should be enhanced. "Head Start saves taxpayers money and cuts crime, it's a win-win for Oregon," said Brooks. "Oregon's law enforcement leaders are encouraged by our state lawmakers' efforts to increase funding for Oregon Pre-kindergarten, but we need the leadership of Oregon's members of Congress to ensure the future economic growth and public safety of our state." FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON is part of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national, bipartisan, anti-crime organization of more than 3,000 members. For a full copy of the report "Investing in Oregon Head Start Saves Money", visit <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/orheadstartcost.pdf>.

*Early Education Prevents Crime, Boosts Economy, Could Generate Tax Savings of \$36,200 for Every Oregon Household by Bend Weekly News Sources*