



The Bell Policy Center

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PRESCHOOL PROGRAM CUTS A FALSE ECONOMY

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Editor:

In the Nov. 16 article, "Education cuts considered," the News reported that the state legislature's Joint Budget Committee is considering a reduction of 2,000 slots in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP).

We hope that when the JBC looks at this option in greater detail, they will drop it from consideration.

First of all, this reduction in preschool slots would not save the state \$6 million as cited in the article. The total budget for the program is \$32 million. The state's share is about 58 percent of this, or \$18 million, with the rest paid for with local revenue sources. If the state cuts 2,000 slots, it would only save about \$3.25 million. In addition, because school districts are allowed to average their pupil count over four years, the full savings would not be realized for several years, making the savings in fiscal year 2003-2004 even smaller.

Long-term studies of the program have proven its effectiveness in bridging the educational achievement gap between at-risk children and their more advantaged peers. We are talking about 2,000 young children who will never be 4 years old again. And without preschool, studies show they might never catch up with their peers.

Let's not take this opportunity from them for what amounts to a relatively small savings in the state's budget.

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