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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Seniors Urge State Legislators to Support Quality Pre-k**

*New Report Shows Diversity of Older Adults Who Champion Early Education in New York*

**Huntington, N.Y.**— Older adults in New York are raising their voices for quality early childhood education, including former New York City Mayor David Dinkins, First Lady Joyce Burrows Dinkins, former New York State Senator John Dunne, and a host of community leaders and grandparents.

New York Seniors4Kids gathered on Friday to send a clear message to legislators: older adults believe early education is vital for young children and benefits all generations. These New Yorkers, ages 50+, urged lawmakers to support the executive budget proposal that maintains funding for New York's Universal Pre-kindergarten program, which currently gives 109,031 children access to early learning.

Seniors4Kids also asked lawmakers to add more flexibility and efficiency to how the state disburses pre-k funds to school districts. Many New York school districts do not make full use of pre-k dollars from the state because, in many cases, funding only covers half-day programs, or does not cover transportation costs.

In a political and media landscape that frequently pits generation against generation, New York Seniors4Kids are demonstrating a different truth: All generations are connected.

"Seniors really care about younger generations. We have to invest sufficient resources for early childhood education," said Pamela Giacoia, Director of Senior Services for the Town of Southampton.

Giacoia is one of more than 130 New Yorkers who volunteer as Captains4Kids for New York Seniors4Kids, an organization that demonstrates the role adults ages 50+ play in support of issues that directly benefit youth.

The Captains4Kids gathered at Rainbow Chimes Inc. Early Childhood Education and Care Center, an award-winning program in Huntington, N.Y., on Friday morning for the release of "New York Seniors4Kids: Raising Our Voices for Quality Pre-K." The publication documents older adult support for voluntary, quality pre-k for all 3- and 4-year-olds in New York. Captains4Kids shared personal stories about the benefits of pre-k, received recognition for their efforts by local dignitaries, read books to pre-k students that featured strong older adult characters interacting with children, and enjoyed song performances by the children. New York Seniors4Kids donated the books to Rainbow Chimes so that all students can benefit from this intergenerational message.

Former Mayor Dinkins, who could not be present at the event but is featured in the Seniors4Kids publication, says, “Few programs offer a guaranteed return as impressive as high-quality, voluntary pre-k.”

Children who attend high-quality pre-k score higher on standardized tests, require fewer special education services, are less likely to repeat a grade and more likely to graduate from high school. They are less likely to commit crimes and become teen parents, and more likely to be employed as adults and earn higher incomes. Pre-k programs produce a more competitive and capable future workforce, and promote long-term fiscal stability and solvency for Social Security.

Captains4Kids on Friday acknowledged the financial hardships New York has suffered in the recent economic crisis. However, investing in early childhood education leads to economic growth, said New York Seniors4Kids State Coordinator Paul Arfin. “In these economic times, we support the proposal to maintain current levels of funding for pre-k,” Arfin said. “However, our lawmakers can act now to improve the systems in place for pre-k funding, so that when the economy recovers, pre-k can be available to all 3- and 4-year-olds in New York.”

For more information about older adult efforts to support quality early childhood education in New York, see [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) and [www.seniors4kids.org](http://www.seniors4kids.org).

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***Generations United** is a national, non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.*

***Seniors4Kids** is a civic engagement initiative at Generations United that demonstrates the important role older adults can play in support of issues that directly benefit children and youth. More than 160 Kentuckians serve as Captains4Kids and countless other older adults in the state have shown their support for voluntary quality early childhood education.*