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JUDICIARY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 1980

For More Information,
Contact Loretta Witt at 743-1700

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (Democrat - Philadelphia) this week called for an investigation by the Department of Public Welfare of Title XX funded day care centers in Philadelphia.

At public hearings of Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare at Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute on April 16, O'Donnell joined dozens of day care parents in urging the Department of Public Welfare to adequately fund day care centers in Philadelphia.

The public hearings were scheduled to allow the public to comment on the Department of Public Welfare's proposed Comprehensive Annual Services Program Plan for 1980 - 1981. This Plan calls for, among other things, a ceiling on the cost per child of day care across the state of Pennsylvania. The proposed cap on spending, to be in effect on July 1, 1980, will effectively shut down a number of centers in Philadelphia or severely curtail their programs.

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Press Release

"It should be quite clear," stated O'Donnell in his testimony, "that what we, as a city or a state, cannot afford is to lose another program that offers so much enrichment to the lives of so many citizens who have so little."

O'Donnell called for a moratorium of up to a year on any funding decrease for day care centers until the continuation of these centers, with their exceptional educational component, was assured.

"I wish to propose", said O'Donnell, "that the Department of Public Welfare begin an immediate investigation of Philadelphia's Get Set program to find out why the present cost per child is so high, and to discover the amount per child that will be necessary to continue to produce a quality day care program with an educational component."

The day care centers in question service 8,000 pre school children in Philadelphia whose parents meet low-income eligibility requirements. Federal funding was established for these centers in the early 1970's to allow parents to seek work or job-training. Since that time, hundreds of citizens

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Press Release

have been able to get jobs and pay their fair share in taxes because their children have been competently cared for.

O'Donnell called the proposed budget cuts "another example of the Thornburgh administration's disregard for folks' need and desire for work." Noting the absence at the hearings of Mrs. Helen O'Bannon, secretary of the Department of Public Welfare, O'Donnell assured parents that nevertheless "your voices will be heard."

There are 137 Title XX day care centers, including Get Set centers, in Philadelphia that will be effected by the budget cuts.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

March 4, 1982

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL ATTACKS DAY CARE DIRECTIVES

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, today attacked two state directives that will "seriously disrupt day care services" in Philadelphia.

O'Donnell, speaking at a meeting of The Learning Center, a community center in Allegheny-West, said Governor Thornburgh's directives "could force people into a position of going on welfare or leaving their children unattended."

O'Donnell is co-sponsor of a resolution calling for a public hearing on the directives which will transfer determination of program eligibility from local day care providers to the state Department of Public Welfare, and will require private day care centers to engage in competitive bidding for the right to continue to provide services. "By executive fiat, the Governor has put day care up for auction and thrown the process of determining eligibility into chaos," O'Donnell said.

Representative O'Donnell called the transfer of eligibility determination "a nightmare. It will have severe effects on working poor parents and on poor parents expecting job offers, because they cannot afford the luxury of waiting to receive from Harrisburg as to whether their children qualify for day care."

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O'DONNELL ATTACKS DAY CARE DIRECTIVES

ADD ONE

O'Donnell said a second directive requiring community day care providers to bid against each other to service individual areas was "divisive and destructive. The directive pits community centers against each other while the city gets direct grants. Only one community center will be permitted to serve each 'area', and in Philadelphia no one has even provided the centers with maps telling them where their areas are supposed to be. This plan will seriously disrupt day care services in this city and state-wide."

O'Donnell told the assembled parents of children using day care services that he co-sponsored the resolution "because there has been no public in-put and no accountability in the entire process."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

October 2, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL INTRODUCES CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION BILL

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-East Falls), the House Majority Whip, today introduced a bill creating a statewide Child Abuse Fund for the development and implementation of programs geared to the prevention, reduction, and elimination of child abuse.

O'Donnell called the Child Abuse Fund "an important addition to legislative proposals on child abuse. The Fund will encourage the development of programs to combat or prevent abuse, and identify the most effective programs so they can receive broader funding," O'Donnell said.

The Child Abuse Fund would be supported by a \$5 assessment on marriage licenses and a \$5 charge to each party to a divorce or marriage annulment. Local governments, non-profit organizations, and other agencies would be eligible to receive start-up subsidies from the fund to create and maintain abuse prevention services for children and their families. "The restrictions we have placed on the use of these monies will prevent local Health Departments from simply using the Fund as a substitute for other government grants," the East Falls legislator explained.

O'Donnell said the marriage and divorce fees were "a logical and painless place to raise money to help kids. Troubled families, such as those where parents are divorced, should be especially concerned about child abuse. And people who are getting married should be encouraged to think in advance about their parental responsibilities."



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

October 12, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM: 843-1700

HOUSE PASSES CHILD SAFETY BILL

The State House of Representatives today overwhelmingly passed legislation requiring the use of car seats by young children. The bill now returns to the State Senate for final legislative approval.

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-East Falls), the House Majority Whip and one of the House leaders in the efforts to enact the bill, called the vote "a key step in adopting overdue and badly needed child-safety laws."

"In this country, more children under four years old are killed each year in auto accidents than die from any other cause," O'Donnell said. "It is time that Pennsylvania joins the other 41 states that already require this kind of protection for kids."

The legislation requires drivers carrying passengers under four years old to make sure that children riding in the front seat of the car wear a federally approved car-seat, and that children in the back seat be properly buckled-up in a seat belt.

House passage of the safety legislation was threatened by a proposal to amend the bill with a controversial measure on oil company ownership of service stations. O'Donnell was instrumental in convincing proponents of that measure not to try to link the two.

"It was important that the issue of child safety not become entangled in the problems of big oil," O'Donnell said.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ben Schuster 843-1700

O'DONNELL CHILD ABUSE BILL PASSES HOUSE

A bill introduced by State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-East Falls) creating a child abuse prevention fund overwhelmingly passed the House this week. Its purpose is to develop programs for preventing, reducing, and eliminating child abuse throughout Pennsylvania.

The Child Abuse Fund established by this bill would be supported by a \$5 assessment on marriage licenses and a \$10 charge upon filing for a divorce or marriage annulment. The federal government, under a 1984 law, will add a quarter to every dollar that the Fund raises.

Representative O'Donnell said, "The Child Abuse Fund will encourage the development of programs to combat or prevent abuse. Marriage and divorce fees are an appropriate way to raise money for this purpose. The fees are low, they are only paid once, and their collective impact will make a big difference in the lives of many children and their families."

The money provided by the Fund will be distributed to local governments and non-profit organizations for new or innovative child abuse prevention and reduction programs. No single organization will be able to receive funds for more than two years.

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O'Donnell added, "\$861,000 will be raised annually through the program and the federal government's contribution will increase the total to \$1.1 million. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency will be responsible for developing statewide plans for the distribution of these funds."

The bill now goes to the State Senate for its consideration.

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July 23, 1985

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ben Schuster 843-1700

O'DONNELL PUSH FOR DAY CARE FUNDS IS SUCCESSFUL

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) led a successful effort to include an additional \$6 million for day care services for working parents in the 1986 State budget which passed the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Thornburgh at the end of June.

O'Donnell said, "These additional funds will allow more parents in Pennsylvania to become productive wage earners and taxpayers without worrying about the availability of day care services. In my legislative district and across the state I have seen many instances where affordable day care has made it possible for parents to obtain and keep much needed jobs."

20,000 children in the state are eligible for day care based on family size and income. The number of available licensed and registered openings for children is currently only a little more than one half the number of women in the work force with children under six years of age.

"By 1990, seventy five percent of our children will have working parents needing child care arrangements," Representative O'Donnell pointed out. "Pennsylvania has moved in the right direction toward meeting this need and lowering a barrier that has kept some people from achieving economic self-sufficiency."

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Legislative Report

State Representative

Robert W. O'Donnell



December 3, 1985

The State House voted 187-6 last week to approve my bill creating a special Child Abuse Prevention Fund that will develop new child abuse prevention programs. This Fund would be subsidized by a \$5.00 surcharge on marriage licenses and a \$10.00 filing fee charged on divorces and marriage annulments.

When I first introduced this bill last session, we estimated that the Child Abuse Prevention Fund would take in \$860,000 each year. Since then, the federal government has enacted a law that would provide an additional 25 cents for every dollar raised by this Fund. That would mean 1.1 million dollars would be available each year to finance new abuse prevention programs.

This kind of special fund is an effective way of providing extra help in the fight against child abuse. We have written the bill so that local governments cannot simply use money from the Child Abuse Prevention Fund as a substitute for other grants in order to shift money away from existing child abuse prevention programs.

Using marriage and divorce fees is a painless and appropriate means to raise money for the Child Abuse Prevention Fund. Individually, it doesn't cost much and collectively, they do a world of good. The bill now has to pass the Senate before it can become law.