



## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACT:** Sara Slaughter  
312/332-2020 phone

### **UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IMPORTANT TO REGION'S FUTURE**

Chicago Metropolis 2020 today expressed support for a gubernatorial task force report outlining a framework to provide access to quality preschool education for 3- and 4-year-olds.

The task force report, "Ready, Set, Grow – Illinois Preschool," was released by Gov. George H. Ryan and recommends ways to phase in universal access to preschool on a voluntary basis and create a comprehensive statewide system over the next several years.

"Studies show that children who receive quality early care and education perform better in school, have lower school dropout rates and higher rates of participation in the workforce as adults," said George A. Ranney, Jr., President and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "This research has convinced business and civic leaders across the nation of the critical need to help children access education before they reach kindergarten age."

Ranney noted that Ryan's task force report was issued the same week that the Committee for Economic Development (CED) called for a strong state/federal partnership to ensure the availability of pre-kindergarten programs nationwide. CED, a non-partisan organization of more than 200 business leaders and university presidents, conducts research and promotes policy programs that address the nation's most pressing economic and social issues. Adele Simmons, Vice Chair and Senior Executive of Metropolis 2020, participated in the Washington, D.C. release of the CED policy statement this week. Simmons described the work underway to expand early education in Illinois.

"Many employers in our region understand that quality early education has long-term benefits for our children and is important to our future workforce," said Ranney. "This task force report outlines a sensible way to bring preschool programs to all children whose parents want them to participate."

Ranney was a member of the Governor's Task Force on Universal Access to Preschool, which was chaired by First Lady Lura Lynn Ryan.

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February 7, 2002

Chicago Metropolis 2020, a non-profit organization created in 1999 by The Commercial Club of Chicago, promotes innovative solutions to long-term challenges facing the Chicago region. With a strong base in the business community, Chicago Metropolis 2020 includes representatives of labor, government, faith-based groups and other civic organizations.

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