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CANTON — As a member of the Canton business community, I support investments in early care and education for stabilizing our economy now and staying on track in the future.

According to research from the business leaders organization, America's Edge, these investments have a huge impact -- today -- on local businesses and the economy.

Here in Illinois, every \$1 invested generates an additional \$1.17 in spending of local goods and services, outperforming investments in other sectors like transportation and construction. The reverse is also true: Every \$1 cut from early learning programs causes Illinois businesses to lose \$1.17 in sales.

And high-quality early learning helps ensure a future skilled workforce. Children who participate in these programs have higher graduation rates, earn more as adults, and enter the workforce with the 21st century skills businesses need, especially in our technology-driven world.

Illinois' Preschool for All program -- which supports preschools like the one at Westview Elementary -- is recognized as one of the most cost-effective, high-quality preschool programs in the country. In his budget, Governor Quinn has proposed full restoration of funding for Preschool for All. That is good for Illinois businesses.

However, the state-subsidized child care program for working families has been threatened with cuts. That would be bad for Illinois businesses struggling to recover.

Balancing this year's state budget will certainly be a difficult task for our elected officials. Now, more than ever, we need to prioritize programs that work and help build a better and more prosperous future. There is little question that investing in quality early care and education fits that bill.

Justin Nelson  
Canton