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Pre-K Program Facing Disastrous Cuts

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Letters to the Editor

[The Miami Herald](#)

With much at risk, Florida is coming up short -- possibly \$109 million short. That's the expected shortfall in funding for the state's voluntary pre-K program that jump-starts our children's education by preparing them to enter and succeed in school.

Florida's allocation per child to provide the constitutionally mandated voluntary pre-K already is the lowest base allocation in the nation. We pay \$2,575 per child, compared with Oklahoma (\$3,966) and Georgia (\$4,249), for example, for this program that benefits 156,000 pre-kindergarteners and employs 6,000 at schools around the state.

Ninety percent of a child's brain develops before the age of 5. Skimping on funding for these important pre-K programs could result in many serious, costly problems later.

Florida's voluntary pre-K has proved successful in addressing the educational-achievement gap in recent years, and the program has expanded as families have taken advantage of the opportunities.

If pending budget shortfalls are not addressed, some providers may decide to stop administering the program. Florida's children deserve not less, but more investment in this critically important program.

Maria Alonso, board chair, The Children's Trust
Octavio A. Verdeja, Jr., board chair, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Miami