

## **Silber urges restoration of preschool programs**

*by Kevin Rothstein*

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Advocates desperate to save preschool programs from Gov. Mitt Romney's budget ax got a boost yesterday from Boston University Chancellor John R. Silber, who called on lawmakers to restore funding.

Speaking at a State House breakfast, Silber said preschool programs were investments worth keeping.

"If you can't afford early childhood education cut off one year in high school," he said. "I'm not recommending that's what we do, but if we don't have enough money for both, an intelligent thing is to put the money where it matters most."

Silber was speaking at a rally in defense of the Parent-Child Home Program, which was sending educators into 1,500 Bay State families before former acting Gov. Jane Swift vetoed \$2.5 million in funding this fiscal year. Romney does not propose paying for it next year. A spokesman called the program "worthwhile," but said the looming \$3 billion deficit leaves no room to restore programs already cut.

Supporters say that by addressing early learning problems in 2- and 3-year-olds, the Parent-Child Home Program more than pays for itself by helping kids succeed later in school and life. Advocates want lawmakers to restore at least \$1 million to keep it afloat.

Salem mother Beth McCuish, 42, said the program made reading to her son Devin fun. "Instead of just reading it and then turning the page, she made it more colorful," she said.