

December 19, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The evidence is clear: early learning programs are one of the best investments the country can make for our current economy as well as our future economic growth. Economists, business leaders, law enforcement officials and military leaders recommend a greater investment in early education. Four recent national, bipartisan polls showed overwhelming public support for a greater investment in early childhood education. As you finalize appropriations for FY 2014, we urge you to restore funding for early childhood programs affected by sequester cuts and expand opportunities for our youngest children to benefit from high quality care. The sequester has prevented tens of thousands of children from receiving high-quality early childhood education as infants, toddlers and preschoolers. We urge you to make the following investments in our nation's economy and economic future by supporting early learning programs in the following ways.

- **Head Start and Early Head Start:** The 2013 sequester cuts eliminated 57,000 young children from participation in Head Start and Early Head Start. Head Start and Early Head Start programs help ensure that our most vulnerable children get a school-readiness experience that meets all their learning and development needs. Head Start serves only two-fifths of eligible preschoolers, and Early Head Start serves less than 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Restoring funds for these core programs, and providing additional investments for expansion of cost-effective partnerships between Early Head Start and child care providers that leverage existing funds and meet high Early Head Start standards, will put these children on a solid path to success in kindergarten and later life.
- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG):** Low-income working families cannot afford the costs of child care, and they need assistance to work and know that their children are safe and learning. Only one out of six children eligible for child care assistance receives it. Nineteen states have waiting lists for assistance; several have such long wait lists that they are no longer taking new applications. Restoring CCDBG funding would protect access to child care assistance for 1.4 million children, as well as help improve the quality of care.
- **Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part C) and the Preschool Grants program (Part B, Section 619):** These grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allow young children with developmental delays and

disabilities to receive the special needs services and education that help them succeed, often reducing or avoiding the need for more costly services later. Restoring funding will allow states to sustain access to these essential services.

- Preschool grants to states: Given the importance of the first five years to children's development and future success, we ask you to include the maximum amount possible to move forward the early learning initiatives reflected in the bipartisan budget agreement and bipartisan early learning legislation. The Strong Start for America's Children legislation would enable more young children from low- and moderate-income families to participate in high-quality early education. Many states have funded prekindergarten, but most still need to improve access to these programs, and/or raise their standards of quality to ensure the greatest economic return on their investment. It is essential that these grants offer funding to high quality child care, Head Start and school-based programs. In particular, we ask you to provide funding for grants to states to improve quality in and access to early learning programs for preschool age children, infants and toddlers.

We urge you to increase funding for these vital child care and early education programs. It will have vast benefits for all of us now and in the future.

Sincerely,

The Advancement Project
Alliance for Children and Families
America's Promise Alliance – Ready Nation
American Federation of Teachers
Blacks in Law Enforcement of America
BUILD Initiative
Campaign for America's Future
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Child Care Aware
Child Care Law Center
The Children's Institute
CLASP
Coalition on Human Needs
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
Early Care and Education Consortium
Easter Seals
The Economic Progress
Fair Share

First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Moms Rising
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Black Child Development Institute
National Center for Families Learning
National Children's Facilities Network
National Council of La Raza
National Diaper Bank Network
National Head Start Association
National Indian Child Care Association
National PTA
National Women's Law Center
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Parents as Teachers
Ready Nation
RESULTS: The Power to End Poverty
Service Employees International Union
Save the Children
Stand for Children
Teaching Strategies
United Way Worldwide
YMCA
YWCA of the USA
ZERO TO THREE