

September 5, 2014

The Honorable Secretary Sylvia Burwell
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

We are grateful for the Administration's recognition that early learning programs are one of the best investments the country can make for our current economy as well as our future economic growth. It is clear from the most recent First Five Years Fund poll that the public also agrees and believes that now is the time to move forward. As you prepare your budget request for FY 2016, we urge you to continue to prioritize expanded investment for early childhood programs.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant:** We appreciate the Administration's efforts to ensure that more children have access to high-quality child care. However, we are particularly concerned about the additional costs related to pending regulations as well as the Senate-passed CCDBG reauthorization. The need for a major investment in child care is also highlighted by the significant decrease in the number of children receiving child care assistance and the overall decline in federal and state child care spending. Since 2006, the number of children receiving CCDBG-funded child care has fallen by more than 263,000 children. Nearly twenty percent of working mothers of very young children now work in low-wage jobs. These low-income working families cannot afford the costs of child care. They need assistance so that parents can work while knowing that their children are safe and learning. Yet, this help is out of reach for most families. A significant investment for both discretionary and mandatory child care funding is critical not only to improve access to high-quality care, but to ensure policies are designed to meet the needs of today's workforce and help build a strong workforce for tomorrow.
- **Head Start and Early Head Start:** Head Start and Early Head Start made strides forward in the FY 2014 appropriation with the restoration of sequestration and the creation of the Early Head Start expansion and Child Care Partnership grants. These grants are in competition right now and should be expanded in 2015. We are very excited about their potential to increase access and improve quality of infant and toddler care. However, despite the overall steps forward, Head Start continues to serve only two-fifths of eligible preschoolers, Early Head Start serves less than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers, and programs continue to experience significantly rising costs. Head Start's funding must also grow to maintain quality, serve more eligible children, and ensure that the program follows its path of continuous quality improvement.

- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV): MIECHV has helped states put in place a significant piece of the early learning continuum by helping families better support their children's early development and learning at home. However, its authorization will expire in March 2015. An extension of this program for several years and an expansion of funding over time is important so that states can plan for the program's continued implementation and expand their services for vulnerable children and families.

We urge you to support sizable new investments for these vital child care and early education programs to support our youngest children and their families. It will have vast benefits for all of us now and in the future. We also look forward to working with the Administration to avoid another sequester which would not only set back progress on early learning but also the other supports low-income children and their families need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Psychological Association

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Children's Defense Fund

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

Committee for Economic Development (CED)

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)

Early Care and Education Consortium

Easter Seals

Fair Share

First Five Years Fund

IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Black Child Development Institute

National Child Abuse Coalition

National Council of Jewish Women

National PTA

National Women's Law Center

Parents as Teachers

Save the Children Action Network
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
The Solomon Project
Teaching Strategies
United Way Worldwide
YWCA
ZERO TO THREE