

September 5, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We are grateful for the Administration's recognition that affordable, high-quality early learning programs are one of the best investments the country can make for our current economy as well as our future economic growth. Your advocacy with elected leaders, education organizations, and the public has been valuable to making progress nationally and in states toward this goal. The recent First Five Years Fund poll re-affirms polls last year that demonstrate that the public also agrees and believes that now is the time to make the investment.

As you prepare the Department of Education's budget request for FY 2016, we urge you to continue to prioritize expanded investment for early childhood programs.

- The Strong Start for Children Act: The Administration's proposal, legislation introduced in the House and Senate, and related advocacy efforts has generated heightened interest in early learning across the country. We urge the Administration to continue to support the enactment of this important bill and to support a new revenue measure to provide high-quality prekindergarten to an additional 2 million children.
- Preschool Development Grants: Incentive funds to encourage states to establish or expand their own prekindergarten programs to serve more children and bolster the quality of programs should continue to be funded.
- 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. Increasing funding will allow states to sustain access to these essential services.

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