

March 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The following organizations, which support strong early learning experiences for young children and efforts to give parents to the opportunity to work, are pleased that the Senate is considering S.1086, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and thank you for your leadership in moving the bill forward. This legislation places a focus on the importance of access to affordable, quality child care for children, families, and our nation's economy.

Since the Child Care and Development Block Grant was last reauthorized in 1996, we have learned much about how to improve the quality of child care and after-school care and how to make child care assistance more accessible to families, from both research and innovative state approaches. This bill incorporates lessons from the research and states in an effort to better protect the health and safety of children in care, improve the quality of care overall and for infants and toddlers in particular, facilitate children and families' sustained access to help paying for care, promote stable child care arrangements, and support providers serving families receiving child care assistance.

While we strongly support the goals of this legislation, achieving these goals will require additional resources. These resources would be a worthwhile investment because stable, high-quality child care enables parents to work and children to learn and grow. Yet 260,000 fewer eligible children received assistance through the Child Care and Development Block Grant in 2012 than in 2006, according to a recent study by the Center for Law and Social Policy. In addition, payment rates for child care providers have stagnated in most states. To reverse the decline in children served and to successfully implement the much-needed improvements included in this legislation, we urge Congress to increase mandatory and discretionary child care funding.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children

American Psychological Association
Child Care Aware
Children's Defense Fund
CLASP
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Early Care and Education Consortium
Early Childhood Policy Research
Alliance for Early Childhood Finance
Fair Share
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Futures Without Violence
groundwork
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
MomsRising
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
National Black Child Development Institute
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Children's Facilities Network
National Council of Jewish Women
National PTA
National Respite Coalition
National Women's Law Center
Parents as Teachers
Prevent Child Abuse America
Service Employees International Union
Stand for Children
Teaching Strategies
United Way Worldwide
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE