



## First Five Years Fund

### State of the Union: Communications Tips for the Early Childhood Community

While the Appropriations deal shows great promise for what is to come in early childhood education this year, it is important that we capitalize on this momentum and use it to advocate for the Strong Start for America's Children Act before, during and after the State of the Union (SOTU). Included below is a guide to support your communications efforts around the State of the Union, including communications ideas and tips, key messages and sample social media content.

#### Communications Asks

##### **Pre-State of the Union**

- Identify and reach out to key local media and reporter targets.
- Contact local reporters to ensure the SOTU is on their radar and offer to connect them with local spokespeople before and after the speech.
  - *Note: We have included a template reporter pitch email on Page 3.*
- Begin monitoring the media for letter to the editor response opportunities, tied to stories about SOTU predictions, State of the State addresses, budget announcements and other local early childhood initiatives.
  - *Note: Utilize the messaging on Page 2 to quickly and easily craft LTEs.*
- Engage in social media, using the **#StrongStart** hashtag
  - *Note: Sample content on Page 5.*
- Email your networks to ask them to participate in social media leading up to the SOTU.
  - *Note: Sample email on Page 4.*

##### **During State of the Union**

- Monitor for key mentions of early childhood education.
- Live-tweet and post on Facebook.
  - *Note: Sample content on Page 6.*

##### **Post-State of the Union**

- Distribute a statement to local media from your organization with comments on SOTU speech.
  - *Note: Utilize the messaging on Page 2.*
- Develop letter to the editor responses to SOTU stories (either positive reinforcement or push for more awareness).
  - *Note: Utilize the messaging on Page 2.*
- Sustain engagement on social media, using sample content.
  - *Note: Sample content on Page 7.*

### **Key Message Points**

- Early childhood education was one of the biggest winners in the recent federal Appropriations bill – receiving a more than \$1 billion increase in federal funding for Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care and grants to states.
- Congress clearly heard the overwhelming support for early learning from key voices across the country including business leaders, law enforcement officials, economists, governors – and many more. This increased federal funding will more than restore early childhood education sequestration cuts, as well as provide a significant increase in funding.
- According to a bipartisan poll conducted earlier this year, 70 percent of Americans support a plan to help states and local communities provide better early childhood education programs to children from birth to age 5—and want Congress to act now.
- Despite this great news, we know that far too many of our youngest learners still lack access to the high-quality early childhood education opportunities necessary for success in career and life.
- Our sights are set on the passage of the Strong Start for America's Children Act, a bipartisan bill that will help our children get a strong start in life, rooted in President Obama's proposal from the 2013 State of the Union. This is a top economic priority for our country in 2014.
- The State of the Union is the time for President Obama to reinforce that investing in early childhood education is a key national policy priority by calling on Congress to pass and fund the bipartisan Strong Start for America's Children Act.
- The Strong Start for America's Children Act would enable more young children from low- and moderate-income families to participate in high-quality early education by helping states and communities build their own quality early childhood education programs.
- The bipartisan Strong Start for America's Children Act is crucial. Many states have funded pre-K programs, but we know that states can't do it alone. It will take federal-state partnerships to allow the expanded access necessary for ensuring the greatest success for children and the largest economic return on investment.
- Increasing federal funding will help states continue their home-grown programs, serve more children and families and get their systems to the point where they pay for themselves through better outcomes and the reduced need for remedial and social spending.
- Making investments in high-quality early childhood education is a clear economic solution backed by a proven body of research, high returns on investment, and it's the right priority for our policymakers.
- This is what our country needs to remain competitive in the global economy. By increasing federal investments, we can ensure that our children do better in school, acquire the skills necessary to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, get higher-paying jobs, rely less on social

programs and contribute more to the economy as adults.

## Sample Outreach Content

### **Sample Pitch to Media (in advance of SOTU)**

SUBJECT: Early childhood education in Obama's SOTU – local spokesperson available [MENTION  
ORG/PERSON'S NAME IF PROMINENT ENOUGH]

Hi Name,

(Given your coverage of education issues, and) if you are planning to cover President Barack Obama's 2014 State of the Union next Tuesday, Jan. 28, I wanted to quickly reach out because the president potentially will be discussing the need to expand early childhood education opportunities.

[Name and quick info of available spokesperson] is available before and after the president's speech to talk with you more about the importance of early childhood education and what the president's potential proposal could mean for children and families in [STATE or LOCALITY].

Please be in touch if you're interested in connecting with [NAME], he/she is an expert in.../can easily discuss...[share short sentence about why they would be good with media]. [IF PLANNING TO DISTRIBUTE STATEMENT] We'll also be following up after the speech with a statement on the State of the Union from [ORGANIZATION] which you're welcome to use in any coverage as well.

Thanks for your consideration,

Your Name

Your Contact Info

### **Sample Content for Stakeholder Email**

President Barack Obama's 2014 State of the Union is Tuesday, Jan 28, and we're hoping he'll continue his commitment to early learning in the speech by calling on Congress to pass and fund the Strong Start for America's Children Act. Even with Congress' recognition of the support for early learning as seen through the recent \$1 billion increase in federal funding for early childhood education, many states need more support to increase access to quality programs and ensure the greatest success for children and the largest economic return on public and private investments.

The State of the Union is the time for President Obama to voice this support for early learning and reinforce that investing in early childhood education pays for itself in the long- and short-term.

We hope you'll engage with us using social media with the #StrongStart hashtag before, during and after Obama's speech and help us spread the message that increased federal funding in early childhood education will help states continue their home-grown programs and serve more children and families, helping our whole country remain competitive in the global economy.

## **Sample Social Media Content**

### **Before SOTU speech**

#### **Facebook**

- Police officers, military generals, business leaders, state legislators and countless others have all urged stronger federal investments in early learning. Will we hear this call from President Obama in tonight's #SOTU? Tune in and share your thoughts!
- Will President Obama continue his commitment to early learning in tonight's #SOTU address? Congress recently agreed to a \$1 billion increase in funding for early childhood education, but many states need more support to increase access to quality programs that ensure the greatest success for children and the largest economic return on public and private investments. The Strong Start for America's Children Act in Congress will make sure our children get a strong start in life and our country succeeds in the global economy. Share your thoughts and tune in!

#### **Twitter**

- Hope @BarackObama calls for all kids to have a #StrongStart w/ #ece in #SOTU tonight! #InvestinKids
- 70% of Americans support increased #ECE investments. Will Obama call for #earlyed in #SOTU? #StrongStart #InvestinKids
- Biz leaders, cops, state legislators & more urged Congress to #InvestinKids Will Obama share #ECE support in #SOTU? #StrongStart
- Let's keep the #ECE momentum going for #SOTU! Tell @BarackObama to #InvestinKids to give them a #StrongStart

### **During SOTU speech**

*We encourage you to live-tweet any quotes from President Obama that mention early childhood education, as well as issues that impact young children and their families.*

*If/when Obama mentions ECE:*

#### **Facebook**

- President Obama just called for [increased early childhood education investments/Congress to take up the Strong Start for America's Children Act/etc.]. Young children and our country's economy will benefit!
- Thrilled that President Obama just mentioned the importance of early childhood education. It's an important investment in our nation's economic future!

#### **Twitter**

- Obama just called for investing in #ECE in #SOTU to give kids a #StrongStart & grow the economy! Let's #InvestinKids
- Obama mentions bipartisan spending agreement that made \$1B #ece investment – We all need to keep supporting #earlyed! #SOTU
- #ECE prevents the #edgap & builds stronger families. Thanks @BarackObama for championing #earlyed in #SOTU #StrongStart
- Obama calls on Congress to take up #StrongStart act, would help states & communities build quality #ECE programs – let's do it! #SOTU

## After SOTU speech

*If Obama mentions ECE:*

### Facebook

- Proud that President Obama used his State of the Union tonight to call for [insert specifics]. We can and should be doing more to make sure our young people get a strong start in life. Congress should pass the Strong Start for America's Children Act to help states and communities build quality early childhood education programs. Let's make it happen!

### Twitter

- Thanks @BarackObama for championing #earlyed in #SOTU. America's children need a #StrongStart for success.
- .@BarackObama calls for Congress to take up #StrongStart act in #SOTU. Let's keep the momentum going & #InvestinKids!

*If President Obama doesn't mention:*

### Facebook

- While President Obama didn't specifically mention early childhood education in his State of the Union tonight, we're excited by increased bipartisan support shown through the latest budget bill and movements in statehouses across the country implementing early childhood education programs. Now's the time to push for the Strong Start for America's Children Act in Congress!

### Twitter

- Even w/o #earlyed mention in #SOTU, the momentum continues – let's #InvestinKids to give them a #StrongStart
- Tomorrow's another day. Let's call on Congress to #InvestinKids & support #earlyed! #SOTU