

August 18, 2010

Robert Gordon  
Associate Director of Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor  
The Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Gordon:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition is grateful for the Administration's commitment to expanding young children's access to high-quality early care and learning opportunities, and welcomes its efforts to ensure a stronger future for the nation. The FY 2011 budget request for child care and Head Start as well your support for the Early Learning Challenge Fund were an important step in ensuring that new investments in this critical area could move forward. As the Administration prepares the FY 2012 budget, we urge that the commitment be maintained by including significant increases in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, Early Head Start, and other key programs that support young children and school-age children, and to provide the resources necessary to enact the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

Investing in child care helps low-income parents get a job and stay in the workforce. Despite the importance of child care assistance as a basic support to both helping families work and ensuring that children are in stable and safe arrangements, child care funding remained stagnant for years. Only one in six eligible children was receiving child care assistance when the last estimate was calculated, and the eligible population has increased while the number of children receiving assistance has decreased since then. Although ARRA funds alleviated some of the shortfall in child care funding, significant gaps remain. In many states, families applying for child care assistance are placed on long waiting lists. Several states have begun limiting help in paying for child care to only those parents receiving or transitioning from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), while hard-working families striving to stay independent are left with few options. An increase of \$2 billion in CCDBG for FY 2012 would offset inflation and maintain current services as well as provide the first installment of funding for a long overdue and important CCDBG reauthorization that bolsters the quality of child care and serves 200,000 additional children.

Head Start and Early Head Start provide much-needed comprehensive support to low-income children and their families. With ARRA funds, 61,000 more children were able to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start. Early Head Start moved from reaching 2 percent of eligible children and families to about 4 percent. An increase of \$2 billion in FY 2012 will allow Head Start and Early Head Start to reach more disadvantaged children and their families, strengthen quality, and help move closer to achieving President Obama's goal of quadrupling the number of children served by Early Head Start.

There is no doubt that states and communities have a long way to go to putting in place early childhood systems of care and education that ensure that all young children, especially low-income children, receive the high-quality learning experiences they need. Funding for the Early Learning Challenge Fund could offer states an important road map for moving forward.

We also urge you to increase funding for the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) Preschool Grants Program (Part B, Section 619) and Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers (Part C) in order to meet the complex needs of young children with disabilities and special needs. Increased investments in these early childhood programs under IDEA will help ensure that young children with disabilities and their families have the supports and services needed to be successful in their early learning activities. In addition, we urge you to expand funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program to support after-school enrichment programs.

In these challenging economic times, families and children are under tremendous financial strain and struggling to get back on their feet. Increased investments in affordable, high-quality early care and learning programs will ensure that low-income families do not have to choose between a job and their children's health and safety and that more children will receive the strong start they need to enter school ready to succeed. We look forward to a FY 2012 budget that will provide the substantial investments in early care and education that our nation needs.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Humane Association  
Children's Defense Fund  
Child Welfare League of America  
CLASP  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Easter Seals  
HighScope Educational Research Foundation  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
IFF  
Insight Center for Community Economic Development  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)  
MomsRising  
National Association for Family Child Care  
National Association for Regulatory Administration  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies  
National Black Child Development Institute

National Children's Facilities Network  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Head Start Association  
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association  
National Organization for Women  
National PTA  
National Women's Law Center  
Service Employees International Union  
RESULTS  
Teaching Strategies, Inc.  
Trust for America's Health  
Voices for America's Children  
Women of Reform Judaism  
ZERO TO THREE