

September 2, 2011

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

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition appreciates that the Administration continues to support increased investments in early care and education as a crucial component of strengthening the nation's education system. These investments are essential so that young children enter school ready to succeed; they also help parents work and fuel the economy during these challenging times. As you prepare your budget request for fiscal year 2013, we urge you to build on those investments in early learning, specifically by including additional funding for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, the Part C Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program and the Part B Section 619, Preschool Grants Program of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Research demonstrates the positive impact of providing specialized developmental and educational supports and services to young children and their families so they are able to succeed in school and beyond. IDEA Part C ensures that infants and toddlers (birth to age three) with special needs and their families receive the early intervention supports and services needed for enhancing child development. Section 619 preschool services ensure free and appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment for preschoolers with special needs.

Funding levels for these valuable programs have been inadequate to address those children who could benefit from them. The number of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities served under IDEA Part C nearly doubled between 1999 and 2009, but federal funding has not kept pace. In fact, since 2004, federal IDEA Part C funding has decreased by almost \$6 million. As a result, many states have narrowed their eligibility criteria to limit further growth in enrollment or increased families' share of the cost through family fees. Federal funding for the Section 619 Preschool Grants Program has decreased by \$16 million since its high in 2002. Federal funding per child decreased from a high of \$803 in 1992 to \$428 in 2009.

Continuing to invest in the RTT-Early Learning Challenge will encourage more states to take the steps that are necessary to create a comprehensive system of high-quality early learning environments. It offers an important road map for moving forward in early childhood. As nationally recognized economists have noted, this is one of the best investments our government can make to improve the long-term educational and economic health of our country. With continued increases in investments in the core programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care and Development

Block Grant that allow low-income children to access these supports, the RTT-Challenge Fund can move states to systems that offer higher-quality opportunities.

We also urge you to ensure adequate funding for other programs that support early learning and development such as Title I, Part B of IDEA, CAMPIS, and other early education funding streams in the Higher Education Act as well as after-school programs.

We appreciate the priority this Administration places on early care and learning and we look forward to a federal budget for fiscal year 2013 that will provide the continued recognition of the importance of the early years before kindergarten as well as the need for enriching after-school activities for older children.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees
Children's Defense Fund
Child Welfare League of America
CLASP
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
Early Care and Education Consortium
Early Child Policy Research
First Five Years Fund
HighScope Educational Research Foundation
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association for Family Child Care
National Association for Regulatory Administration
National Black Child Development Institute
National Children's Facilities Network
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Jewish Women
National Head Start Association
National Indian Child Care Association
National Organization for Women
National PTA
National Women's Law Center
Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States
Save the Children
Service Employees International Union
Teaching Strategies, Inc.
Voices for America's Children
ZERO TO THREE