

August 12, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition welcomes the commitment that the Administration has made to investing in Head Start and child care assistance as well as this year's effort to building a strong early childhood framework with the Race To the Top-Early Learning Challenge. One of the key metrics of successful use of the Early Learning Challenge Grants is that more low-income and disadvantaged children will be participating in high-quality programs. In order for states to ensure that these children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities, there must be an increase in funding in the fiscal year 2013 budget for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, and Early Head Start. Because early childhood is not undergirded by state and local funds in the way that K-12 education is financed, these federal programs are necessary to enable low-income children to gain access to the high-quality early childhood experiences that help them to succeed in school and in life. The Budget Control Act of 2011 put these supports to children and families which have been underfunded for years in greater jeopardy.

Unfortunately, with the expiration of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and stressed state budgets, many states currently are reducing their investments. In addition to limiting access to child care assistance, states have been forced to halt or weaken quality initiatives.

Families are losing child care assistance or being placed on long waiting lists. For example, Arizona has cut the number of children in child care assistance from 48,000 to 29,000 since February 2009. Georgia will provide child care assistance to an estimated 10,000 fewer children in FY 2012. Nearly 4,000 families in Mississippi and 5,000 children in Louisiana are losing their child care assistance. Florida's waiting list of nearly 68,000 children is likely to grow due to a funding cut of \$68 million in the state's budget, which will affect child care assistance for nearly 15,000 children. North Carolina's waiting list has grown from almost 38,000 children in early 2010 to close to 47,000 children in early 2011.

States are also making cutbacks to elements of high-quality early learning systems. Pennsylvania significantly cut back on the T.E.A.C.H.® program, which provides educational scholarships to teachers to meet the higher credentials demanded by its Quality Rating and Improvement System, and state prekindergarten program. New Mexico also significantly cut funding for T.E.A.C.H. North Carolina has reduced funding by 20 percent for its Smart Start program, which supports a range of early childhood services, including child care assistance for families and initiatives to boost the quality of child care.

With the ARRA funds, Head Start and Early Head Start were able to serve more than 60,000 additional children in the past two years. The modest growth in Early Head Start was essential given the important brain development that occurs in children's first three years of life. Yet, this hallmark program still serves only 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Head Start programs

are also in need of increased resources to meet the growing need as child poverty increases, and as they work to make the improvements required by the 2007 reauthorization.

We welcome your strong commitment to young children and urge you to ensure that the budget for fiscal year 2013 provides the significant investments in child care, Early Head Start, and Head Start that will offer our poorest young children increased access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Humane Association  
Americans for Democratic Action  
Children's Defense Fund  
Child Welfare League of America  
CLASP  
Community Action Partnership  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Easter Seals  
First Children's Finance  
First Five Years Fund  
First Focus  
Generations United  
HighScope Educational Research Foundation  
Horizons for Homeless Children  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
MomsRising  
National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA Licensing)  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies  
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education  
National Association of Mothers' Centers  
National Black Child Development Institute  
National Children's Facilities Network  
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  
RESULTS  
Save the Children  
Service Employees International Union  
Teaching Strategies, Inc.  
United Way Worldwide  
Voices for America's Children  
ZERO TO THREE