

June 24, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition thanks the Committee for the resources provided to support vulnerable children and families through ARRA and urges the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to provide an increase of \$1 billion in discretionary funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and nearly \$1 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start in the FY 2011 appropriations bill. Once these increases are provided, we urge you to invest additional dollars in the Early Learning Challenge Fund, which will encourage states to move towards more comprehensive early childhood systems and higher-quality programs for low-income children ages birth to five. We also strongly urge you to significantly increase funding for the early childhood programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These investments will allow low-income children to have access to the early learning opportunities they need and parents to have access to the work supports they need to reach their full potential and contribute to our nation's economy now and in the future.

In these challenging economic times, the CCDBG is particularly important to help families afford reliable child care, which enables parents to get and keep a job and children to be in safe, stable settings that promote their growth and learning. The additional CCDBG funding provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) demonstrates the difference that increased investments can make for children and families. Arizona prevented 9,230 children from losing their child care assistance each month from February to December 2009. Alabama prevented 3,000 children from losing their child care assistance. Georgia cleared its waiting list and in August 2009 began serving 5,000 to 8,000 additional children per month. New Jersey had removed more than 3,000 children from its waiting list as of January 2010.

States are also using the additional CCDBG funds to move toward higher-quality child care by piloting quality rating and improvement systems, expanding networks that support infant and toddler care providers, helping providers comply with licensing requirements, and developing innovative efforts to enhance child care providers' and teachers' skill and knowledge.

An increase of nearly \$1 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start will enable these programs to maintain the unique educational, health, nutrition, and family supports they offer to the most disadvantaged children and families. The funding increase is necessary in order to continue to serve the 14,000 three- and four-year olds in Head Start and the 50,000 infants and toddlers in Early Head Start that were able to participate as a result of ARRA funding and to maintain the approximately 24,000 new jobs that were created.

Substantial research demonstrates that children receiving Head Start services have higher achievement test scores, high school graduation rates, and immunization rates, and decreased child mortality rates, criminal activity, need for special education, and need to repeat grades later on in school.

Increased investments in the 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. Since FY 2004, the actual level of annual federal funding for the Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program (IDEA Part C) has decreased by \$4.9 million despite significant growth in the numbers of children and families served. In the Preschool Grants Program (IDEA Part B, Section 619) increased numbers of children served and limited funding have decreased the per-child amount of federal funding for preschoolers served in the program, from a high of \$803 per child in 1991 to the projected \$517 per child in 2011 (according to the Administration's Budget Request). Additional funding for these programs will offset these declines and accommodate the increased needs of children and families.

Finally, we call for the enactment and funding of the Early Learning Challenge Fund this year. This program was passed by the House as part of a larger education bill in September 2009 and has continued support in the House and Senate. The Early Learning Challenge Fund will provide competitive grants to states to help them better align and coordinate their early care and education programs and encourage investments in initiatives to promote quality improvements in all segments of early education and care.

Increased investments in early childhood programs are essential today to help the many families under financial strain in the current economy and the growing number of children living in, or at the edge of, poverty. By making it possible for more parents to work and more children to have the early education experiences that help them enter school ready to succeed, these investments benefit our economy in the short term and the long term.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Humane Association  
Children's Defense Fund  
Child Welfare League of America  
CLASP  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Easter Seals  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
IFF  
Insight Center for Community & Economic Development

Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Low Income Investment Fund  
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 Children's Facilities Network  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Organization for Women  
National Women's Law Center  
Nonprofit Finance Fund  
RESULTS  
Service Employees International Union  
Teaching Strategies, Inc.  
Voices for America's Children  
Women of Reform Judaism  
YMCA of the USA  
ZERO TO THREE