

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

We urge you to join us in supporting funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, and Early Head Start that will enable these programs to sustain the crucial services they provide to children and families and bolster quality. We also urge you to support an Early Learning Challenge Fund to help states create effective early learning systems, as well as funding for early intervention through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Grants for Infants and Families). Together, these programs provide at-risk children with the early learning experiences they need to succeed in school, work, and life. Furthermore, early childhood programs allow low-income parents to keep working.

Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy that will help lower our deficit in the long run. According to noted economists, including Nobel Laureate James Heckman and former Federal Reserve economist Art Rolnick, the substantial return on investment of high-quality early childhood education makes it a sound public investment that benefits taxpayers. In fact, research has found the return on investment of high-quality early childhood programs to be up to \$16 for every \$1 invested. Significant savings for federal, state, and local governments are achieved through decreased spending on education remediation and special education, less crime, improved health outcomes, higher high school graduation and college matriculation rates, decreased dependence on welfare, and increased tax revenues.

Unfortunately, high-quality early childhood programs currently reach just a fraction of those children and families who stand to benefit. Only one in six eligible children receives child care assistance. Only four percent of eligible infants and toddlers participate in Early Head Start and less than half of eligible preschool-age children participate in Head Start.

We therefore ask you to support robust funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to help ensure that children and families do not lose child care, and to provide states with resources to bolster child care quality. We also ask you to support robust funding for Head Start and Early Head Start that will allow these programs to maintain services and make quality improvements. In addition, we urge you to include funding for an Early Learning Challenge Fund, which will help states create strong, streamlined early learning systems, and robust funding for Part C of IDEA for much-needed early intervention services for infants and toddlers.

These are wise investments that will keep the economy moving now, provide more children the early education experiences they need to become productive adults in the future, increase the return on investment of early childhood spending by improving quality, and help lower our nation's long-term deficits.

Sincerely,

Al Franken

Olympia Snowe

Bob Casey Jr.

Richard Blumenthal

Patrick Leahy

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Herb Kohl

Daniel K. Akaka

Chuck Schumer

John F. Kennedy

Max Baucus

Robert Port

Lisa Murkowski

Carl Levin

Ben Cardin

Sheldon Whitehouse

Tom Odan

Jeffrey A. Merkle

Jack Reed

Bob Sanders

Amy Klobuchar

Mark Yin
C. H. Davis

Deanne Stakes

Rabitt Menendez

Jim Johnson

Paul Beach

Frank R. Lautenberg

Donna Peris Ter

Jay Byrnes

Maria Cantwell

Ron Wyden

Allyson Etters