

August 18, 2010

The Honorable Secretary Kathleen Sebelius  
United States Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

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. We deeply appreciate the increases in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start and Early Head Start that were included in the Administration's FY 2011 budget request. The proposed increases recognized how critical it is to maintain the investments that had been made through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and to strengthen and improve CCDBG through a reauthorization. As the Administration prepares the FY 2012 budget, we urge that the commitment be maintained by including significant increases in funding for 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. 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 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. These programs are unique in their multi-faceted approach and their recognition of the importance of the role of parents in children's lives. 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.

The Early Learning Challenge Fund will provide states and communities with support and incentives to develop 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. States and communities have a long way to go in achieving this goal, but the Early Learning Challenge Fund could offer an important road map for moving forward.

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 parents 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  
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