

October 28, 2009

Robert Gordon
Associate Director of Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Gordon:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition greatly appreciates that the Administration, recognizing that early care and education creates jobs today and builds a strong workforce for the future, included investments in this critical area in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As the Administration prepares the budget for FY 2011, we urge it to include significant increases in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start and Early Head Start as well as funding for other key programs that support young children and school-age children.

When America supports child care, Head Start, and Early Head Start, we encourage children, families, and our nation to reach their full potential. Greater investments in CCDBG, Head Start and Early Head Start:

- Allow more children and families to benefit from these vital programs;
- Support critical improvements in a long overdue CCDBG reauthorization;
- Help Head Start programs meet the new requirements of the Head Start Act of 2007; and
- Provide resources to programs to assist them in moving toward and sustaining higher quality standards and as a result ensuring that more disadvantaged children are enrolled in high-quality programs as envisioned in the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

The unmet needs of children and families are growing. In these challenging economic times, it is particularly important to help families afford stable child care, which can help parents get and keep a job. Yet, due to funding that remained stagnant until recently, there are significant, long-standing gaps in the affordability and quality of our child care system. For example, only about one in seven children eligible for federal child care assistance currently receive help. In 2009, only nine states had reimbursement rates for providers who serve families receiving child care assistance at the federally recommended level compared to twenty-two states in 2001. An increase of \$3.7 billion in CCDBG for FY 2011 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 additional children.

The recent funding increase for child care has made a difference. Due to the additional FY 2009/2010 CCDBG funding, Arizona prevented 15,000 children from losing their child care

assistance. Alabama was able to maintain support for 3,000 children who were about to lose child care assistance. Maine and Florida are able to provide child care assistance for some of the children on their waiting lists. States are also using the additional CCDBG funds to move toward higher-quality child care by piloting quality rating and improvement systems, expand networks that support infant and toddler care providers, and develop innovative efforts to enhance child care providers' and teachers' skills and knowledge.

Increasing funding for Head Start and Early Head Start is essential as well. These programs are unique because of the comprehensive support they offer to the most disadvantaged families and children. Over the past eight years, as funding failed to keep pace with rising costs, many programs were forced to make cuts in areas such as staffing, training, and transportation. Flat funding also meant that Head Start was able to serve only about 40 percent of eligible preschool-age children and Early Head Start was able to serve less than three percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Increased funding in FY 2009/2010 will help many Head Start and Early Head Start programs to restore their services to previous levels as well as to reach more children and families. The expansion is vital to many local communities that need the comprehensive early childhood services these programs offer, as indicated by the large number of applicants for the new funds. It is also vital given that 1.1 million children under six are living in poverty now than in 2001. The funds will also help the programs still struggling to make the improvements required by the 2007 bipartisan Head Start reauthorization. An increase of \$3.7 billion in Early Head Start and Head Start funding for the FY 2011 budget will help these programs to achieve the goals of the reauthorization and make progress toward the President's goal of quadrupling enrollment in Early Head Start.

We also urge you to increase funding for 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) in order to meet the complex needs of young children with disabilities and special needs and to include a \$250 million increase in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program to support older children in enriched after-school activities.

Families are under financial strains that grow by the day. The number of young children living in poverty continues to increase. Making additional investments will help sustain and strengthen child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and other early care and education programs so they can serve the growing number of families who need affordable, high-quality early learning options for their children. We look forward to a budget for FY 2011 that will provide the substantial investments in early care and education those children, families, and communities sorely need.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Psychological Association
Cherokee Nation

Child Care Law Center
Children's Defense Fund
Child Welfare League of America
CLASP
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Professional Recognition
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Early Care and Education Consortium
Early Childhood Consultancies
Easter Seals
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Leviticus 25:23 Alternative Fund, Inc.
National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA)
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE)
National Black Child Development Institute
National Black Police Association
National Child Care Association
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
Pre-K Now
Service Employees International Union
Teaching Strategies, Inc.
Voices for America's Children
Women of Reform Judaism
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE