

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 131
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156
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 in Fiscal Year 2013 to enable these programs to sustain the crucial services they provide to children and families and bolster quality. We also urge you to continue supporting the Early Learning Challenge Fund as a part of the Race to the Top program, to help states create effective early learning systems. Finally, we ask for your support of 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. Early childhood programs have the added benefit of allowing low-income parents to keep working and contributing to the economy.

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 as high as 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 access to affordable 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 continue making quality improvements. In addition, we urge you to continue funding for the Early Learning Challenge Fund, which is helping states create strong, streamlined early learning

