

October 28, 2009

The Honorable Secretary Arne Duncan
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The Child Care and Early Learning Coalition greatly appreciates that the Administration has recognized that early care and education investments are an important part of advancing essential reforms so that every child in America can receive a complete and competitive education—from birth through career—by including investments in this area in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As you prepare your budget request for fiscal year 2011, we urge you to build on those investments in early care and education 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) and allow for substantial increases in these programs.

In 1986, Congress recognized the importance of providing individualized supports and services for young children with disabilities and their families by passing P.L. 99-457. Financial incentives were provided for states to create comprehensive early intervention for infants and toddlers with special needs through Part H (now Part C), and preschool services under Part B, Section 619. Since then, research has continually demonstrated the importance of providing specialized developmental and educational supports and services to young children and their families. IDEA Part C ensures that infants and toddlers (birth to age three) with special needs and their families receive the early intervention supports and services needed for enhancing child development. Section 619 preschool services ensure free and appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment for preschoolers with special needs.

Adequate funding of these important programs is necessary to ensure that they can meet the goals of improving child and family outcomes to help children succeed in school and in life. Despite the continued growth in the number of children served in both programs, federal funding has decreased over the last decade.

The number of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities served under IDEA Part C has grown from 187,899 children in 1999 to 322,000 children in 2007. This is a growth of more than 60% in the number of children served, while, during those eight years, the federal appropriation grew by only about 18%. In fact, since fiscal year 2004, federal IDEA Part C funding has decreased by \$8.7 million.

Over the last 10 years, to meet the decline in federal Part C funding per child, 20% of states have narrowed their eligibility criteria for services and 75% have enacted family cost share in the form of a family fee system. Additional states report they are considering a narrowing of eligibility criteria and increasing family cost share to attempt

to meet budget challenges. Some states indicate that without the ARRA funding, they would not have been able to participate in the federal Part C Early Intervention Program this year.

The per child amount of federal funding for preschoolers served under the Preschool Special Education Program continues to decrease, from a high of \$803 per child in 1992 to the projected \$503 per child in 2010 (according to the Administration's 2010 Budget Request.)

When America supports IDEA programs and services for young children with disabilities and their families, we help children and families to reach their full potential. ARRA funds have made a significant difference. States and local school districts are using the additional IDEA funds for important and sustainable investments including online professional development to enhance teachers' and other service providers' skills and knowledge, expansion and enhancement of data systems for increased accountability, new assistive technology for children, and improvements in child outcome and assessment systems, as well as serving additional children and families.

We also urge you to include funding increases for other programs that support early learning and development such as literacy programs, Title I, Part B of IDEA, CAMPIS, Even Start, and other early education funding streams in the Higher Education Act as well as after-school programs.

We appreciate the priority this Administration places on early care and learning and we look forward to a budget for fiscal year 2011 that will provide the substantial investments in these areas as well as for after-school supports for older children.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
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 Children's Facilities Network
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Head Start Association
National Indian Child Care Association
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