

Dear Senator,

As the Senate marks up their Economic Recovery Package, we urge you to follow the lead of noted economists such as Nobel laureate James Heckman and Art Rolnick, Senior Vice-President and Director of Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, who advise that investments in young children are one of the strongest investments not only for the short term but also for sustained growth and job creation. Investing in programs for young children such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start and Early Head Start can accomplish three goals: ensuring that children gain the skills they need to be productive workers of the future, helping parents work so they can take advantage of job opportunities and support their families, and preserving and creating jobs in early childhood education.

The Child Care, Early Learning Coalition strongly urges you to support increased investments of a minimum of \$3 billion for the CCDBG, \$3 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start, and \$600 million for Part C, IDEA Infants and Families, in the Economic Recovery package. The additional funding for child care will allow states to provide child care assistance for approximately 480,000 children in low-income working families who have been hit hard by the economic crisis, and create paid work for an estimated 190,000 caregivers. The additional funding for Head Start will allow over 162,000 more children to participate in the program and create over 80,000 jobs.

State child care assistance programs and Head Start and Early Head Start programs have the capacity to serve many more children and their families if they receiving additional funding. These programs can provide a vital support for low-income families during these difficult times, helping parents get and keep a job and offering stable, nurturing early learning environments for young children.

Jobs in the child care sector and Head Start and Early Head Start for directors, teachers, assistants, bus drivers, and other support staff can be created immediately, and are certain to stay right here in the U.S.

Child care not only enables parents to work but also gives them the peace of mind they need to be productive in their jobs. The licensed child care sector allows parents to earn more than \$100 billion annually—and these additional wages, in turn, generate nearly \$580 billion in direct and indirect labor income, approximately \$69 billion in tax revenues, and more than 15 million jobs.

By helping low-income parents afford good child care, we can ease a financial burden for families struggling to pay their bills during these difficult economic times and ensure parents do not lose a job, or pass up a job opportunity, simply because they cannot afford care for their children while they work. Many parents were already struggling to afford child care costs before the economic downturn, and the challenge is only becoming greater as family budgets tighten more each day. Yet most families are unable to receive help with these costs—only one out of seven children eligible for child care assistance under federal law receives it. Funding for the CCDBG has been nearly flat since 2002,

with nearly 140,000 fewer children receiving child care help in 2005 than in 2002. Without help in paying their child care bills, parents are being forced to use care that is unreliable and does not support their children's learning.

Expanding Head Start and Early Head Start programs will also help stimulate the economy, through direct employment of providers, teachers, and support staff and by offering parents job training and employment opportunities as part of the program's comprehensive support services. Currently, only about half of preschoolers eligible for Head Start and less than 3 percent of infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start are able to participate. In addition, Head Start experienced a 13 percent real cut in funding from FY 2002 to FY 2008, leading to cutbacks in staffing, hours, and other services.

A stronger infrastructure should include not only new and improved roads and bridges and computer networks, but child care and Head Start investments well.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Children and Families
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Center for Law and Social Policy
Child Care Law Center
Council for Professional Recognition
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exception Children
Early Care and Education Consortium
Early Childhood Consultancies
Easter Seals
First Children's Finance
The First Five Years Fund
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association
IFF
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
Kids Are Priority One Coalition
Leviticus 25:23 Alternative Fund, Inc.
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Low Income Investment Fund
MomsRising
National Association for Regulatory Administration
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
National Black Child Development Institute
National Council of Jewish Women
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association
National Women's Law Center
Service Employees International Union
United Neighborhood Centers of America

Voices for America's Children
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment
YMCA of USA
Zero to Three