



December 1, 2015

The Honorable
Address 1
Address 2

Dear Representative/Senator:

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned Los Angeles County and statewide children’s advocacy agencies to express our strong support for the early literacy and early childhood education and development provisions in the conference agreement on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

We are pleased that S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), recognizes early childhood education and development as a critically important part of the K-12 continuum, thus acknowledging the urgent need for the federal government to support states to require better coordination between and alignment of early learning programs, preschool programs, and elementary schools to better ensure all children experience smooth transitions between programs, and have the strong foundation they need to succeed when they enter the K-12 system and beyond.

We, the undersigned, urge Congress to enact these new requirements and programs with sufficient funding, increasing overall federal investment in the full range of child care and preschool programs, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Head Start. It is critical that the federal government provide states and early learning and child care providers with sufficient resources to both improve the quality of programs and expand slots to serve additional eligible children, particularly those from low-income families who do not have access to care due to insufficient federal investment.

While California legislators have slowly begun to rebuild the State’s early learning system, which was so devastated in the Great Recession, it continues to have an enormous unmet need. If passed, this new and increased federal funding can support California to fulfill its Preschool Promise –to ensure all 4-year-olds have access to pre-K.

While S. 1177 does not provide for a universal preschool program, we applaud the provisions in the bill that will lead to better coordination and alignment between early learning programs and the early grades to create a continuous system that meets the needs of children through age 8. Among those provisions are:

Title I

- o The requirement that states’ academic standards be aligned with relevant state early learning guidelines.
- o That states’ Title I plans describe how the state will provide assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and individual elementary schools choosing to use their Title I funds to support early childhood education programs.
- o That LEA Title I plans describe “if applicable, how the LEA will support, coordinate, and integrate services provided under this part with early childhood education programs at the LEA or individual

school level, including plans for the transition of participants in such programs to local elementary school programs.”

- That LEAs which use a portion of their Title I funds for early childhood education services ensure that such services meet the Head Start performance standards.
- Including in LEA plans for Title I schoolwide programs, “strategies for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood education programs to local elementary school programs.”
- Including as an allowable use of funds in such schoolwide programs, establishing or enhancing preschool programs for children below age 6.
- Including as an element in Title I Targeted Assistance programs, “coordinating with and supporting the regular education program, which may include services to assist preschool children in the transition from early childhood education.”

Title II, Part A

- Including as a state activity under Title II, Part A, “supporting opportunities for principals, other school leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, early childhood education program directors, and other early childhood education program providers to participate in joint efforts to address the transition to elementary school, including issues related to school readiness.”
- Including as an allowable use of funds by LEAs under Title II, programs and activities to increase “the ability of principals and other school leaders to support teachers, teacher leaders, early childhood educators, and other professionals to meet the needs of students through age 8, which may include providing joint professional learning and planning activities for school staff and educators in preschool programs that address the transition to elementary school.”

Early Literacy

- Requiring that states use at least 15 percent of their funds under the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants for “state and local programs and activities pertaining to children from birth through kindergarten entry.”
- The provision in Sec. 2226 that provides for the Secretary of Education to award grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements for early literacy services. One such program that we are hopeful might receive funds from this section is an innovative early literacy program called *Little by Little*, which provides literacy services to families at WIC centers.

English Language Learners

- Including as one of the purposes under Title III, “to assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals, and other school leaders” in “establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs” and “to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all-English instructional settings.”
- Including as one of the subgrant purposes under Title III, “Developing and implementing new language instruction educational programs and academic content instruction programs for English learners and immigrant children and youth, including early childhood education programs, elementary school programs, and secondary school programs.”
- Including under the Title III National Professional Development Project, “to support strategies that promote school readiness of English learners and their transition from early childhood education programs, such as Head Start or State-run preschool programs, to elementary school programs.”

Indian Education

- Including as one of the activities under the Indian Education program, “early childhood education programs that are effective in preparing young children to make sufficient academic growth by the end of grade 3, including kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs, family-based preschool programs that emphasize school readiness, screening and referral...”

Education for Homeless Children

- Including among the information that the Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths in each State must collect, “the nature and extent of the problems homeless children and youths have in gaining access to public preschool programs and to public elementary schools and secondary schools.”
- Including as an element in the State plan for homeless children a description of procedures that ensure that “homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the State educational agency or local educational agency, as provided to other children in the State.”
- Requiring that LEAs’ liaison for homeless children and youths ensure that “homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs)... early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act... and other preschool programs administered by the local educational agency.”

Preschool Development Grants

- The new Preschool Development Grant program in Title IX. Since California did not receive a grant under the current Preschool Development Grant program, we are hopeful that the State will be eligible to apply for grant funding under this new program. We also are pleased that renewal grants may be used for much-needed expansion of access to existing early learning programs, in addition to requiring the coordination and alignment of the State’s early learning system.

We urge the members of the California Congressional delegation to ensure the inclusion and provision of adequate funding for the above early literacy and early childhood education provisions in the ESEA reauthorization measure when it comes before the members for a vote. We look forward to working with Congress to ensure sufficient resources are provided to meet the states’ overwhelming unmet need for these programs, and to ensure states can effectively implement these new requirements.

Sincerely,



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