



July 20, 2009

The Hon. George Miller, Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Miller:

On behalf of Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, congratulations and thank you for your leadership in introducing a historic 10-year, \$10 billion federal investment in our nation's youngest learners. The Early Learning Challenge Fund, proposed in Title IV of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009, offers a federal-state partnership sought by the experts, researchers, and advocates who have lead the movement to increase the availability of high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten.

We write to recommend one addition to the text of this important legislation that would leverage the strengths and resources of public schools by emphasizing their critical role in improving the early learning options available to young children. The "priority" section of the bill highlights the use of child care quality funds for state activities. Similarly, this section provides an opportunity to encourage states and LEAs to use Title I funds for early learning services – an authorized but little used resource.

States that have actively involved schools in building their early learning system have been far more successful than those that have not. For that reason we ask you to consider adding a fourth priority for the Secretary of Education to consider in selecting states for the Quality Pathways and Development grants to recognize states "whose applications contain assurances that the state will work with local education agencies to use funds under Title I of ESEA for activities described in section 403(f)." We attach legislative language for your review.

Because the Obama Administration has – twice now – proposed a specific allocation of Title I funds for pre-kindergarten, we assume there continues to be interest on the part of the President and his team in encouraging states and LEAs to use Title I for pre-k. A recent letter from 17 members of the Education and Labor Committee to the House Appropriations Committee signaled strong support for use of Title I funds for pre-k, leading us to believe this amendment would find support within the Committee.

Thank you again for your leadership. We look forward to continuing to work with you, your colleagues, your staff, and the Obama Administration to move this important legislation forward. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or assistance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Libby Doggett, Deputy Director
Pew Center on the States



Kathy Patterson, Senior Officer
Pew Center on the States

Attachment

cc: Members, Committee on Education and Labor
Joan Lombardi
Roberto Rodriguez

Attachment

HR 3221, pg 130

Sec 402

(e) PRIORITY IN AWARDING GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this title, the Secretary shall give priority to States—

- (1) whose applications contain assurances that the State will use, in part, funds reserved under section 658G of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858e) for activities described in section 403(f);

INSERT:

- (2) whose applications contain assurances that the state will work with local education agencies to use, in part, funds under Title I of ESEA for activities described in section 403 (f);

Re-number as appropriate:

- (3) that dedicate a significant increase, in comparison to recent fiscal years, in State expenditures on early learning programs and services; and
- (4) that demonstrate efforts to build public-private partnerships designed to accomplish the purposes of this title.