



May 20, 2009

The Hon. Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, HHS, and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

We write to urge you and the members of the Appropriations committee to fund early education investments proposed in the President's Budget:

- \$300 million for the Early Learning Challenge Fund
- \$500 million for Title I Early Childhood Grants

Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, works with policymakers and advocates in the states to advance policies to provide pre-k for all three and four year olds. The President's Budget proposal is a critical first step in the right direction - a step founded on strong evidence from economic studies and brain research.

The **Early Learning Challenge Fund** to provide competitive grants to states has been at the center of President Obama's education agenda. Although the Administration has not yet proposed authorizing language, there is already momentum in Congress, as pre-k incentive grant legislation has been introduced in both chambers (HR 702, HR 2184, HR 555, S 240 and S 839).

Under the current proposal, \$500 million in **Title I Early Childhood Grants** would work as an incentive for districts to invest recovery funds and other local resources in pre-k – giving students in low-income communities a stronger foundation for success. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act permits a variety of uses for early learning in qualifying schools, but school districts have been using only about 2 percent of Title I funds for pre-k, despite evidence that doing so would decrease spending on costly remedial programs down the line.

Governors and legislators in 38 states have steadily increased investment in pre-k to nearly \$4.6 billion last year, reaching over 1.1 million children. That means that in a 'good' year only 24 percent of four year olds and 4 percent of three year olds had access to state pre-k. Today, as states face record budget shortfalls, these children are at risk of losing their chance to prepare for school and our nation is at risk of losing long-term economic advantage. **If properly authorized and funded, the Early Learning Challenge Fund and the Title I Early Childhood Grants would prevent backsliding and accelerate the investment in evidence-based programs critical to the health of our economy.**

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Please let us know if we can provide more information on these important investments by contacting either of us, or Anya Malkov, government relations associate, at amalkov@pewtrusts.org. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely yours,



Danielle Gonzales, Project Manager
Pre-K Now
States



Kathy Patterson, Senior Officer
Government Relations, Pew Center on the