



June 4, 2007

The Hon. Rosa DeLauro
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeLauro:

Thank you for your leadership in introducing HR 1779, which would provide student loan relief to Head Start teachers. As the House prepares to consider reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, we hope you will extend these provisions to also include pre-kindergarten teachers in state-funded programs.

Providing for loan relief will encourage more highly educated teachers to lead pre-k classrooms. Studies have shown that teachers with four-year degrees and training in early education dramatically enhance the quality of their programs and produce better outcomes for their students. In order to realize the enormous benefits that pre-k programs deliver to students and to the general public, the government must provide appropriate incentives to the teachers who will prepare our children to succeed in school and in life.

By extending loan forgiveness to all pre-k teachers, the House will go far in addressing the persistent gap between the resources available to pre-k professionals and their colleagues in the K-12 system. Head Start and other pre-k teachers are already facing steep disadvantages, including salaries that average half the incomes earned by elementary and secondary educators. Loan forgiveness will help to ameliorate the financial disincentives already in place while encouraging better-educated teachers to join the pre-k workforce.

As you know, pre-k benefits children, their families, and their communities. Research has consistently demonstrated that high-quality pre-k increases high school graduation rates, raises test scores, reduces grade repetition, and obviates the need for special educational services. Participants of high-quality pre-k programs generate a significant return for every dollar invested in reduced costs and increased earnings, most of which returns to the general public. High-quality pre-k is not only the right choice for young children, it is good public policy.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please contact either us or federal policy fellow Matt Smith (msmith@preknow.org) if you have any questions about the issue of providing student debt relief for all pre-k teachers, and please let us know if we can share more information about high-quality, voluntary pre-k for all three and four year olds.

Sincerely yours,



Libby Doggett, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Kathy Patterson
Federal Policy Director

cc: Members, Education and Labor Committee, U.S. House of Representatives