



June 29, 2007

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

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of pre-kindergarten teachers, students, and advocates nationwide, we applaud the Education and Labor Committee for providing student loan relief for early childhood educators in the reconciliation measure (H.R. 2669). The legislation approved by the Committee sets a new standard for federal investment in early childhood education and recognizes the important contribution of pre-k teachers to the welfare of our children and our economy.

We recommend that the modifications to the Higher Education Act (HEA) included in H.R. 2669 serve as a basis for the work that lies before the Committee in the upcoming reauthorization. We hope the reauthorization will be fully consistent with the provisions for student loan relief in H.R. 2669 and that it will also address teacher training and professional development for pre-k teachers through Title II of HEA.

As the Committee has recognized, federal support for pre-k teachers is needed now more than ever to meet the rising demand for high-quality pre-k services. Despite increases of more than \$1.3 billion in state-level commitments over the past two years, average per-child expenditures have declined as states struggle to accommodate rising enrollment rates. The nation will need to recruit and train well over 100,000 new pre-k teachers to give every four year old access to a high-quality early education. The Congress can act now to create the incentives and infrastructure necessary to achieve the goal of providing pre-k for all.

Pre-K Now recommends that HEA maintain the changes included in H.R. 2669 that recognize pre-k as an area of national need and enable pre-k teachers to draw on federal support in repaying their Federal Stafford and Federal Direct Stafford/Ford loans. In addition, the Committee can ensure that pre-k teachers are eligible for Perkins loan relief by inserting appropriate language in section 465(a)(2)(A), which currently limits the application of funding to elementary and secondary school teachers.

We also suggest that the House update Title II to incorporate pre-k in provisions for K-12 teacher training and recruitment. This can be accomplished by modifying Section 203 to include specific provisions for pre-k teacher training programs as "partner institutions." This necessary support for pre-k teacher preparation will move our nation closer to providing high-quality instruction throughout a child's education.

Please contact us or federal fellow Matthew Smith (msmith@preknow.org) if we can provide any additional information on the important work of assuring that all of our children are able to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. We look forward to working with you and your staff as HEA moves through the process of reauthorization.

Sincerely yours,



Libby Doggett, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Kathy Patterson
Federal Policy Director

CC: Members, Committee on Education and Labor