



December 23, 2008

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Vice President-Elect
451 6th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Vice President-elect Biden:

We applaud the commitment to the middle class shared by you and the President-Elect, and demonstrated by the creation of the White House Task Force on Working Families. Access to high-quality early education has a direct impact on today's working families, while also laying the foundation for a robust middle class of tomorrow.

For far too many middle-class families, the very program proven to help all young children enter school ready to learn and succeed is beyond their reach. That is the conclusion of the enclosed report, *The Pre-K Pinch: Early Education and the Middle Class*, released in November. Our research found that eligibility requirements and prohibitively high costs lead many families to sacrifice basic household needs to pay for early education and care for their children – or to settle instead for low-quality options.

As you consider both short-term and long-term economic recovery proposals and their impact on middle-class well-being, we urge you to keep in mind the large number of families that, despite their own commitment to education and their efforts to stretch household budgets, see their children effectively locked out of the classrooms that would prepare them to thrive in school and in life. Our nation's financial well-being depends on workers who are prepared for their own economic self-sufficiency, and key to that career preparation is high-quality early childhood education, proven by decades of research to yield from \$7 to \$16 for every dollar invested.

Through analysis and personal stories, the report demonstrates middle class families' struggle to afford quality early education programs when they do not qualify for state pre-kindergarten programs. In many of the states with pre-k programs, families earning more than 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold (\$42,400 for a family of four) are not eligible. At the same time, the cost of early education programs has risen faster than inflation for more than a decade.

The Pre-K Pinch reveals two false assumptions underlying income-eligibility limits: first, that such families can afford other kinds of early education and care programs; second, that children from middle-income households don't need and wouldn't significantly benefit from pre-k. Overwhelming evidence refutes both assumptions.

The report also includes recommendations for the 111th Congress and the incoming Obama-Biden administration, including new support for state pre-k programs to enable them to improve quality and serve more children. We look forward to working with you and your team in the coming weeks and months, and if you have any questions please contact either of us, or Anya Malkov, federal policy fellow, at amalkov@preknow.org. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Libby Doggett, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Kathy Patterson
Federal Policy Director