



September 13, 2007

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
U.S. House of Representatives
1229 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hirono:

On behalf of pre-kindergarten students, teachers, parents, and advocates nationwide, we thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 3289, the *Providing Resources Early for Kids (PRE-K) Act*, to help states enhance the quality of their pre-k programs. Your bill sets a new standard for federal support for high-quality pre-k education. We applaud the bill for its rigorous attention to the essential elements of quality, its multiple thresholds of eligibility to encourage improvements at all levels of program development, and its designation within the Department of Education. These components create an ideal blend of benchmarks and incentives that provide states with the tools they need to provide the very best pre-k education.

Federal incentives to improve program quality will help to ensure that the benefits of participating in high-quality pre-k are available to children and their communities. The *PRE-K Act* supports the crucial curriculum and classroom elements that distinguish high-quality programs. We applaud the bill's provisions for high-level training of pre-k teachers, including a requirement to move toward employing teachers with BA degrees in every classroom. We also welcome the requirement that states adopt nationally established best practices and maintain per-child expenditures in order to receive funding. The bill recognizes the importance of providing comprehensive services, including health screenings and extended program hours, and establishes that pre-k should operate in tandem with child care and birth-to-three providers.

The *PRE-K Act* allows states to draw on federal funding at various stages of implementing their programs. The two-tiered system of eligibility ensures that states that are beginning to develop their pre-k systems will have ample incentives to strengthen the essential components of program quality while enabling states that are further along to continue to make improvements. We also welcome the flexibility that permits funding to be used to increase capacity when high-quality benchmarks have been met. By encouraging states to concentrate on quality before capacity, the bill outlines a clear path toward the goal of providing high-quality pre-k for all three and four year olds.

Pre-K Now strongly supports including the bill as a new title in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to assure that pre-k becomes a part of the larger federal commitment to education. We urge the Education and Labor Committee to include the bill in its markup of the landmark education law.

Thank you for your strong support for pre-k education. Please contact us or federal policy fellow Matt Smith (msmith@preknow.org) if we can give you further assistance in providing 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, Committee on Education and Labor