



January 14, 2008

The Hon. Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman  
HELP Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Michael Enzi, Ranking Member  
HELP Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Senator Enzi:

Thank you for your leadership on legislation to benefit young children in 2007. Advocates for high-quality pre-kindergarten welcomed the reauthorization of Head Start and the progress made in including pre-k teachers in the Higher Education Act. As we begin 2008, we hope the Committee will turn its attention to pre-k incentive grant legislation to support the bipartisan national movement toward high-quality pre-k.

We urge the Committee to move ahead with legislation to create a new federal pre-kindergarten incentive grant to support the progress states are making in providing high-quality voluntary pre-k to all three and four year olds. With S. 1823, the Ready to Learn Act pending in your committee, as well as S. 1573, The Early Childhood Investment Act; S. 1374, The Prepare All Kids Act; and S. 152, The Early Education Act of 2007, the Congress has a tremendous opportunity to help more children enter school ready to learn.

We had hoped to see pre-k legislation included in the Committee's reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and we continue to support such an effort. But in light of the difficulties in achieving ready consensus on No Child Left Behind, we hope you will take the opportunity to move forward quickly with stand-alone legislation.

As you know, a bipartisan majority of governors and state legislators are making significant investments in high-quality, voluntary pre-k. For the current fiscal year, states have allocated \$4.3 billion for pre-k programs, up 45 percent from just two years ago. This year close to 90,000 additional children will be enrolled in state pre-k because of those wise investments. With federal support, we can do even more.

A federal incentive grant to states to create or improve their pre-k programs as envisioned in the bills mentioned above would move our nation closer to the vision of quality, voluntary pre-k for all three and four year olds. Research underscores the value of early childhood education: poor academic achievement is foreshadowed by low cognitive, linguistic, and social functioning in the years prior to kindergarten. High quality pre-k leads to better outcomes for children and for society at large.

We look forward to working with you to produce a significant federal investment in high-quality pre-k. Please contact us or federal fellow Matthew Smith ([msmith@preknow.org](mailto:msmith@preknow.org)) and let us know how we can be of assistance in moving forward with federal support for high-quality pre-kindergarten. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Libby Doggett, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Kathy Patterson  
Federal Policy Director

cc: Members, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
The Hon. Barbara Boxer; The Hon. Robert Casey; The Hon. Kit Bond