



June 4, 2007

The Hon. José E. Serrano
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Serrano:

We would like to recognize your leadership in introducing H.R. 209 and to recommend that you consider extending its provisions to include teaching assistants in pre-kindergarten classrooms. As Congress moves to reauthorize No Child Left Behind (NCLB), we strongly urge you to include pre-k teaching assistants in any amendments that provide funding for classroom paraprofessionals.

Well-trained teaching assistants are an integral part of providing high-quality pre-k. Studies show that increased teacher training and certification provide better preparation for children in state pre-k programs nationwide. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends that both the lead teacher and teaching assistant have, at a minimum, a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) sets the bar even higher, recommending that all assistant pre-k teachers have at least an Associates Degree in early education. The best pre-k classrooms are led by teachers who hold a B.A. degree with specialized training and are supported by teaching assistants who possess strong skills and training in early childhood development.

By including pre-k teachers in its provisions, your proposal will help states build pre-k programs that meet the high-quality standards which account for the strong learning outcomes we all want for our youngest children. According to NIEER, only 10 of the 38 states that fund pre-k require teaching assistants to have a CDA or equivalent credential. Federal funding will enable those states that have requirements to train more qualified teaching assistants and will demonstrate to states with inadequate provisions that the resources are available to help them implement certification requirements.

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

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Doggett".

Libby Doggett, Ph.D.
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Patterson".

Kathy Patterson
Federal Policy Director

cc: Rep. George Miller, Chairman, Education and Labor Committee