

May 12, 2008

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono  
United States House of Representatives  
1229 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: *Providing Resources Early for Kids Act of 2007 (H.R. 3289)***

Dear Representative Hirono:

On behalf of the 95,000 school board members who serve the nation's 49 million students in our local public schools, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) would like to thank you for your leadership on early education issues and express our support for the *Providing Resources Early for Kids Act* ("Pre-K Act").

As you know, the cognitive, social, and emotional skills that children develop during their early years are essential building blocks for their entire educational lives. School board members recognize the critical role that quality pre-kindergarten programs play in helping to set a positive trajectory for student success, and believe strongly in the need for increased federal investment in this area.

Despite the importance of early childhood education in the continuum of learning, the U.S. Department of Education currently spends less than 2% of its \$57.6 billion annual discretionary budget on preschool education. The *Pre-K Act* would provide needed federal resources to states to expand and improve voluntary, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for children in our communities.

Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs demonstrate higher achievement levels in the elementary grades, show greater interest in learning, and are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education classes. In addition, these programs can help to close the achievement gap that exists between poor children and their more affluent peers—a key goal of No Child Left Behind.

Unfortunately, however, many families do not have access to public preschool programs and are limited in terms of the quality of program they can afford. This bill will help to address these challenges by establishing a federal-state partnership that will expand pre-k opportunities for children and encourage states to meet high standards in early education.

NSBA is particularly pleased that this bill establishes a new program under the direction of the U.S. Secretary of Education (in consultation with the Secretary of HHS) that expands the focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. For far too long, the U.S. Department of Education has tended to overlook the importance of early education, yet the evidence is overwhelmingly clear that children's early learning experiences have a powerful effect on their K-12 success.



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In addition, NSBA is encouraged by provisions in the legislation that require states to establish a plan toward ensuring that all preschool instructors are highly qualified with a bachelor's degree as well as require state programs to use research-based curricula that are aligned with early education standards. These quality measures are essential in providing developmentally appropriate instruction that is aligned with the expectations of local schools.

We look forward to working with you to refine other provisions in the bill as it moves forward in the House Education and Labor Committee.

The *Pre-K Act* is an important down-payment investment in the future of our children. We are hopeful that given your and other's strong leadership on this issue, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will pass legislation to strengthen pre-k opportunities for our children and make a critical difference in our communities.

Thank you again for your leadership. If you have any questions, please contact Chrisanne Gayl, Director, Federal Programs at 703 838-6763 or [cgayl@nsba.org](mailto:cgayl@nsba.org).

Sincerely,



Michael A. Resnick

Associate Executive Director

MAR: cg/kc

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Cc: Members, House Committee on Education and Labor