

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Investing in Early Education: Paths to Improving Children’s Success”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, issued the following statement today at a committee hearing on “Investing in Early Education: Paths to Improving Children’s Success.”

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Good morning. I'd like to welcome everyone to our hearing: "Investing in Early Education: Paths to Improving Children's Success."

I can't think of a more critical issue for us to explore in our first full committee hearing of 2008 than the need for expanding quality early education opportunities for our nation's children.

As we will hear from our panel of experts today, providing a good educational foundation for our children during their earliest years of life not only improves student success down the road, but is vital to building a stronger, more innovative, and competitive future for our country.

Over the past decade, there has been groundbreaking research on brain and child development that underscores the importance of the first five years of a child's life.

In combination with their genes, children's experiences in these critical early years influence brain chemistry, architecture, and growth in ways that can have lasting effects on their health, learning, and behavior.

Families are children's first and most important teachers throughout life.

But with nearly 12 million children under the age of five – or nearly two-thirds of all American children under five – in some type of regular child care arrangement, early care and education providers also play a great role in children's development and growth.

As a nation, we simply cannot afford to ignore the types and quality of early care and education settings that are available to our children.

Research shows that the achievement gap we see in elementary school and beyond exists before children enter kindergarten.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study overseen by the Department of Education, for example, found that twice as many 4-year-olds from upper-income family households were proficient in early math skills when compared to 4-year-olds from the lowest income households.

What this means is that if education reform begins in elementary school – we're starting five years too late.

But the quality of early education is not just an issue for low-income families. Finding high-quality, affordable care and education can be difficult for all families.

The average cost of child care averages between \$4,000 and \$10,000 a year, and usually ranks as the second highest expense for families, after housing.

Federal, state, and local programs have shown us that investments in high quality early education can make a tremendous difference in children's futures – both inside and outside of the classroom.

High quality early education can improve children's reading, math, and language skills, strengthen parenting practices that help increase school readiness, and lead to better health and behavior.

But we also have a long way to go to ensure that all children can get a high-quality early education foundation.

Pre-k and child care standards and oversight vary greatly across states.

A vast majority of states have no training requirement for child care providers prior to working in a classroom. Thirteen state pre-k programs meet five or fewer of 10 key quality criteria.

The first five years of life provide us with an incredible opportunity to ensure that all children have the tools they need to achieve in elementary school and beyond.

Investments in these programs must be made wisely and we must ensure that we target resources to what works.

But it is clear that new and greater investments must also be made.

If we are to succeed at reforming our education system and ensuring success for all children, then improving the early care and education settings for our youngest children must be one of our top priorities.

And if we are to maintain our leadership in this global economy, we must focus on investing in our children during their most formative years.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing from each of you about what the science tells us about what is working and what challenges lay ahead.

Thank you.

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