

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JUDD GREGG

**HEARING ON : “EARLY EDUCATION: FROM SCIENCE TO
PRACTICE”**

**IN 1989, PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH CHALLENGED OUR
NATION AND OUR NATION’S GOVERNORS TO DO TWO THINGS:
FIRST, TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE OUR
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THEREBY THE ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF OUR NATION’S STUDENTS AND SECOND, TO
WORK TOWARD THE GOAL THAT ALL CHILDREN WOULD ENTER
SCHOOL READY TO LEARN.**

**WELL, THE FIRST PART OF THE CHALLENGE WAS REALIZED
THANKS TO THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF OUR CURRENT
PRESIDENT, GEORGE W. BUSH, WHO CHALLENGED THOSE OF US
IN THIS BODY TO PUT PARTISANSHIP ASIDE, ROLL UP OUR
SLEEVES, AND GET TO WORK ON BEHALF OF THE CHILDREN. AND
WE DID JUST THAT.**

**WITH THE PASSING OF THE ESEA REAUTHORIZATION, WE
HAVE TAKEN SIGNIFICANT, IF NOT MONUMENTAL STEPS TO
IMPROVE THE EDUCATION OF OUR K-12 STUDENTS.**

**THE SECOND PART OF THE CHALLENGE, THAT ALL
CHILDREN WOULD ENTER SCHOOL READY TO LEARN, REMAINS,
AND HAS NOW BECOME THE FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION.**

**I AM HOPEFUL THAT WE CAN EMBARK UPON ACHIEVING
THIS GOAL WITH THE SAME PASSION, COMMITMENT, AND
WILLINGNESS TO PUT POLITICS ASIDE AS WE DID THE FIRST.**

**IT IS CLEAR TO ALL OF US WHO HAVE EXAMINED THE DATA
ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT THAT LEARNING TAKES PLACE WELL
BEFORE A CHILD STEPS FOOT INSIDE THE KINDERGARTEN
CLASSROOM. THE CARE, ATTENTION, EDUCATION AND NURTURE
THAT A CHILD RECEIVES PRIOR TO SCHOOL SETS THE
FOUNDATION FOR HIS OR HER FORMAL EDUCATION.**

IN FACT, MUCH OF THIS LEARNING TAKES PLACE NOT IN THE CLASSROOM, BUT AT HOME. PARENTAL INTERACTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT CAN HAVE A PROFOUND INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN.

SIGHTS, SOUNDS, TOUCHES... THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT EARLY LEARNING IS MADE OF. THAT IS WHAT THE SCIENCE TELLS US. YET THE CHALLENGE TODAY IS HOW TO TRANSLATE THAT INTO EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENTAL POLICY. ONE THAT RECOGNIZES AND RESPECTS THE FACT THAT PARENTS ARE CHOOSING FROM A WIDE VARIETY OF OPTIONS, RANGING FROM AT-HOME CARE, TO FAMILY CARE, TO FORMAL PRESCHOOL. THESE OPTIONS ARE VARIED, BUT THEY ARE ALL DESIGNED TO ATTAIN THE SAME GOAL– THAT CHILDREN BE ABLE TO ENTER SCHOOL READY TO LEARN.

THREE WEEKS AGO WE HEARD FROM THE FIRST LADY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT. NOT FROM FLASH CARDS, BUT FROM HEALTHY, CONSISTENT AND RESPONSIVE ADULT-CHILD INTERACTIONS.

TODAY WE WILL CONTINUE TO DIALOGUE ON THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES. WE WILL LEARN WHAT SCIENCE HAS TO TELL US ABOUT HOW YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THEY ABLE TO LEARN AND THRIVE. WE WILL EXAMINE THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN, BOTH IN THE HOME, AND OUTSIDE OF THE HOME, AND WILL HEAR FIRST HAND FROM PRACTITIONERS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN PROVIDING ENRICHED EARLY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND HELPING PARENTS LEARN MORE EFFECTIVELY HOW TO BE THEIR CHILD'S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING TODAY AND LOOK FORWARD TO A CONTINUED DIALOGUE ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE.

