

**Honorable George Miller**  
**Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee**  
**Opening Statement for Full Committee Mark-Up of H.R. 3289**  
**The Providing Resources Early for Kids (Pre-K) Act**  
**Wednesday, June 25, 2008**

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Good morning.

Today the Committee will consider H.R. 3289, the Providing Resources Early for Kids Act, introduced by Mazie Hirono, a member of this Committee and a devoted champion for America's youngest children.

We have a strong moral obligation to make sure that all children in America have the support they need to thrive. We also know that supporting children, particularly in their youngest years, is the smart thing to do for our country and our economy.

Compelling new research on early childhood and brain development concludes that the first years of life have a much greater and lasting impact on children's future growth than we previously understood.

With science telling us that early childhood experiences influence the very architecture and chemistry of a developing brain, it would be profoundly irresponsible for us as policymakers not to integrate this knowledge into the work we do.

A dollar spent on a child's future is a dollar invested, not a dollar consumed. That's because fully nurturing, educating, and supporting young children reaps dramatic benefits for this nation as these kids grow up.

Indeed, different studies on early childhood education have found that spending \$1 today can produce savings much greater than that down the road.

Children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to commit crimes. They are more likely to be engaged members of our society and productive participants in our economy.

Unfortunately, our country has been slow to recognize and address the needs of our youngest citizens, perhaps because, until recently, clear scientific evidence about brain development and early childhood was lacking.

Only 20 years ago, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was advising Head Start centers not to display letters of the alphabet on the classroom walls.

Today, we know children's brains are like sponges, wired and eager to learn, and that literature-rich environments are one key component of cognitive growth.

Neuroscience can now also demonstrate that cognitive growth happens in concert with social and emotional development.

But there remain many ways in which our policies neglect the basic needs of our youngest children.

For example, 60 percent of children under age six spend significant time in child care settings. Yet there is a severe shortage of affordable high-quality child care in this country. As a result, families must struggle to find and afford good care.

The Pre-K Act addresses shortcomings in national policy by establishing a federal-state partnership to expand high-quality early childhood educational opportunities to more children.

The legislation will provide incentives to states to ensure that their pre-k programs meet children's developmental and educational needs.

States would receive federal funding that they could use for a variety of program improvement purposes, including: increasing the number of early childhood educators with bachelor's degrees; reducing student-teacher ratios; implementing research-based curricula, and providing vital comprehensive services such as health screenings and nutritional assistance.

If the education reform this Committee considers begins in elementary school, we are starting five years too late. Supporting and investing in young children is not only the right thing to do – it is the necessary thing to do if America wants to remain competitive in the global economy.

I thank Congresswoman Hirono and Chairman Kildee for their leadership on this issue, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Thank you.