

July 17, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman,
House Education & Labor Committee
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) strongly supports your Early Learning Challenge Grants Fund proposal included in the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, HR 3221.

NACCRRA works with more than 700 state and local child care resource & referral agencies throughout the nation serving families with children in 99 percent of all populated zip codes in the United States. We have first-hand knowledge of the challenges parents face in looking for high quality child care in their community. NACCRRA has released several state by state reports related to the quality of care and the importance of quality early learning settings, which have found that states have much work to do to ensure that children are both safe and learning in licensed child care settings. NACCRRA has also reviewed state early learning guidelines and compared them to state child care licensing policies finding a large gap between state early learning standards and child care licensing requirements and policies.

Your Early Learning Challenge Grant Fund is an enormous opportunity for states to focus on improving the quality of early learning settings across the board. State standards and initiatives vary greatly. The challenge your bill presents to the states to establish birth-to-five strategies with high standards of quality, across all settings, is highly commendable. Providing incentives to the states not just to set standards but also to support early learning programs integrating those standards through instructional and programmatic practices is right on target. Professional development and strengthening the early education workforce is critical to expanding high quality settings as are the provisions related to parent engagement and parent understanding about quality programs and the connection to school readiness.

NACCRRA shares your vision to ensure that all children start school ready to succeed, particularly disadvantaged children, and fully supports the Early Learning Challenge Grants Fund. High quality early learning settings make a difference and we look forward to working with you to make this bill a reality.

Sincerely,



Linda K. Smith
Executive Director