



The First Five Years  
Fund

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

The Honorable John Kline  
Ranking Member  
Education and Labor Committee  
2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

July 16, 2009

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline:

I am writing on behalf of the First Five Years Fund to express our excitement about, and endorsement of, the Early Learning Challenge Fund provisions included in the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. This Fund will help improve access to high quality early education opportunities for our youngest children, and we urge all members of the Committee to support it.

The Early Learning Challenge Fund will help give more young children access to high quality early learning opportunities and the many social, emotional, and cognitive benefits that result. Children who participate in high quality early learning programs, particularly those who come from at-risk backgrounds, demonstrate improved academic achievement, reduced grade retention, fewer referrals for special education, higher high school graduation rates, and increased and improved job opportunities later in life. They are also less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system or dependent on public assistance.

Investments in high-quality early childhood education provide enormous returns to the individuals that they serve, as well as to the American taxpayer. Each dollar invested in quality early childhood programs will generate future dividends. Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman estimates a ten dollar return for every one dollar invested and offers this succinct advice: "Invest in the very young."

It is no secret that a thriving economy requires a stable, skilled, and innovative workforce, or that our nation's social and economic viability depends upon the quality of educational opportunities available to our children. The evidence abounds – quality learning opportunities for children age birth to five are wise investments that yield ongoing dividends to participants, their families, and to society as a whole.

By investing early, we ensure that the next generation is well-equipped with the skills necessary for academic, professional, and life success. We look forward to continuing to work with the Congress and the Administration to ensure that even more disadvantaged children have access to high quality early education opportunities. We thank the Committee on Education and Labor for its support of the Challenge Grants, and urge its timely enactment.

Sincerely,

Cornelia Grumman  
Executive Director

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