Dear Governor:

Today we are delighted to announce the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge competition winners. Thirty-five states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico embraced this historic challenge, convening stakeholders and developing proposals to improve early learning and development programs across their states. Whether a state is awarded a grant, the educators, children, and families in those states that applied for a grant are already a step ahead because of the work that was done to develop a vision for raising the bar on quality across early learning programs, including those serving children from low-income families who too often start kindergarten already behind their classmates.

We know that real and meaningful change in early learning and development — the kind that results in dramatically better outcomes for all of our children — comes from setting the highest expectations and doing the hard work of comprehensive reform. We received many strong proposals from states all across America and are pleased to be able to provide grants to nine states. The following applicants have been selected to receive Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grants to support their early learning and development reform agenda: California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington state.

When our two Departments first announced the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge program, we said that to win the future, our children need a strong start. These states have created high-quality comprehensive plans to improve early learning and development programs around five key areas of reform: establishing successful state systems; defining high-quality, accountable programs; promoting early learning and development outcomes for children; supporting a great early childhood education workforce; and measuring outcomes and progress.

We are deeply grateful to Congress for supporting this program. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services are committed to doing everything we can to help all applicants move forward with implementing their Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge plans and other bold reforms. In order to support states in their continued early learning and development reform efforts, we have posted every application on the Department of Education's Web site, and will soon be posting comments and scores from peer reviewers.

To the winners, we congratulate you. To others who applied, we salute you for your hard work, and encourage you to continue your reform efforts on behalf of educators, children, and families across the country. We look forward to continuing to work with all states in support of their efforts to learn from each other and ensure that more children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.

Sincerely,

Arne Duncan   Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Education   Secretary of Health and
                                                    Human Services