July 17, 2009

<u>VIA FACSIMILE (202) 225-3961</u>
The Honorable George Miller
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear Chairman Miller:

The National Women's Law Center strongly supports the Early Learning Challenge Fund included in H.R. 3221, and thanks you once again for your constant commitment to improving the lives of young children and their families. The Challenge Fund recognizes the importance of reaching children from birth to five, and offers an innovative approach to encouraging states to develop the early childhood systems necessary to help disadvantaged children get the strong start they need to succeed. It sends an important signal to the states about the factors they need to address to develop high-quality early learning environments and will provide resources to a number of states to implement these important reforms.

The Early Learning Challenge Fund incorporates core program standards as well as pathways to ensure that a range of programs can meet and sustain high standards over time, professional development paired with adequate compensation for teachers, and comprehensive supports for young children and their families, which are the key factors that must be in place for both young children and their families to reach their full potential.

The creation of the Early Learning Challenge Fund, if accompanied by continued and significant investments in our core early learning and child care programs—the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Section 619 and Part C of IDEA—will help to ensure that low-income families will have access to the high-quality early learning opportunities that the Challenge Fund seeks to expand. We look forward to working with you to ensure the enactment of this landmark initiative as well as for increased funding and improvements in the core early childhood programs.

Sincerely,

Nancy Duff Campbell
Co-President

Helen Blank
Director, Leadership, Public Policy