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5,000 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence

July 20, 2009

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

Dear Chairman Miller:

The more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders, and victims of violence who are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS know from the front lines in the fight against crime—and the research—that high-quality early investments in kids have a powerful impact on reducing later crime.

We are writing to thank you for investing \$1 billion per year, over 10 years, in high-quality early learning programs through the “Early Learning Challenge Grants” in H.R. 3221, the “Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009.”

This investment will help make our communities safer by expanding access to high-quality early learning programs nationwide, particularly for at-risk disadvantaged youth, and through incentives for states to improve the quality of early learning programs. **We are proud to support this initiative, and we look forward to working with you and the Committee on Education and Labor toward its enactment.**

Expanding Access

We are extremely pleased that the proposed Early Learning Challenge Fund will significantly expand access to high-quality early learning programs, particularly for at-risk disadvantaged and low-income children, birth to age five. This legislation requires the federal government to consider the number of low-income children under age 5 within a state when determining grant amounts, requires states to develop plans for expanding the number of disadvantaged youth participants in high-quality early learning programs, and requires states to use at least 65 percent of Quality Pathways Grants funding for increasing participation among at-risk, disadvantaged youth in high-quality early learning programs.

Research clearly shows high-quality early learning programs help reduce later crime and violence. A randomized study of three-year-olds who had participated in Early Head Start found that, compared to their peers who did not, the Early Head Start kids had higher levels of cognitive and language development, better attention to play, and lower levels of aggressive behavior. At-risk kids who were left out of the high-quality High/Scope Perry preschool program were five times more likely to be chronic offenders (more than 4 arrests) by age 27 than those who participated.

Expanding access to high-quality early education programs is a significant step toward addressing an overwhelming unmet need. Head Start, for example, serves just half of eligible, low-income kids, while Early Head Start serves fewer than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Only 1 in 7 kids in eligible low-income families receives help from the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

to help pay for child care, and the care provided through CCDBG is too often of insufficient quality.

Improving Program Quality

Thank you for emphasizing in the Early Learning Challenge Fund the need for quality improvements in early learning programs. This legislation requires states to set early learning and child development standards, as well as developmentally appropriate early learning approaches to prepare kids for school. It also requires states to implement program-rating systems to improve program quality across different types of early learning settings, integrate evidence-based standards, and provide financial incentives to help programs meet and sustain higher quality levels.

Study after study shows that the maximum crime reduction impact—and many other benefits of early childhood education—can occur only when programs are comprehensive and of the highest quality. Research has established that high-quality programs share several common characteristics including: highly qualified teachers with appropriate compensation; comprehensive and age-appropriate curricula that nurtures children's development across all domains, including social, emotional and behavioral development; strong parent involvement; and screening and referral services. The Early Learning Challenge Fund's investment in improving these areas will help kids get the start they need in life and make our communities safer.

We strongly support the Early Learning Challenge Fund initiative, and look forward to working with you to ensure its enactment. The result will be generations of disadvantaged children progressing toward school success and graduation later than later arrest and incarceration.

Sincerely,



David S. Kass
President



Miriam Rollin
Chief Operating Officer



Nick Alexander
Federal Policy Director