



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT CORPORATION

CAPITOL

CORNER

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### Budget and Appropriations

On Friday, July 10, 2009, the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill was considered by its House Appropriations Subcommittee. As always, details were scarce and no legislation or reports were distributed. Subcommittee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) reminded his colleagues that the nation is experiencing a deep recession and the Subcommittee had serious and difficult choices before them about funding for the many high priority programs within their jurisdiction. For education, the bill provides \$64.7 billion. The Subcommittee ultimately supported some Administration requests, but rejected others. Below is a summary:

- Increases funding for Even Start to \$66 million.
- \$10 million for a new Promise Neighborhoods initiative to support community-wide approaches to lifting children out of poverty.
- \$400 million for the new Reading Initiative in schools.
- Maintains funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant at \$2.127 billion and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families initiative at \$63.311 million.
- Increases funding by \$126 million for Children and Family Services Programs to \$9.437 billion.
- Provides \$25.6 million above the President's FY 2010 request for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for a total of \$3.551 billion.
- Rejects the Administration's request to cut Title I grants to school districts by \$1.5 billion and level funds Title I funding to LEAs at \$14.5 billion.
- Does not include \$500 million requested for Title I early childhood grants (See Detailed Information Below).

The full Committee will meet to debate the bill on Friday, July 17, 2009 at 9:00 am. At that time, funding charts and an explanatory report are expected to be distributed. Additionally, the Senate Appropriations Committee must still consider its version of the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services and

Education Appropriations bill, which is expected to be July 28, 2009 for the Subcommittee and July 30, 2009 for the Full Appropriations Committee.

### **Early Childhood Grants program Rejected**

On Friday, July 10, 2009, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) marked up the FY 2010 LHHS Appropriations Bill for the agencies under its jurisdiction. The panel rejected the Obama administration's request to shift \$1.5 billion from Title I, Part A Basic Grants to School Improvement Grants. As a result, the bill does not include several new and unauthorized initiatives that the Administration proposed to finance by cutting Title I grants to 14,000 school districts, including a new Title I Early Childhood Grant Program. Committee Chairman Dave Obey (D-WI), when asked if the cuts hurt the administration's ability to focus on the lowest performing 1 percent of schools, responded that he was simply unwilling to tell half of House members they would be receiving a cut to Title I, Part A Basic Grants in their districts. He added that the Title I Early Childhood Grants program is unnecessary because preschools can already be funded under existing Title I funding streams.

### **House Reconciliation Bill**

Earlier today, Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, introduced his student loan reconciliation bill, the "Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009." To ensure more kids reach kindergarten ready to succeed, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act includes an Early Learning Challenge Fund to increase the number of low-income children in high quality early learning settings.

Specifically, this legislation will provide funds to reform state standards for early education programs and boost the quality of existing programs by investing \$10 billion over 10 years in competitive grants to challenge states to build a comprehensive, high quality learning system for children birth to age 5. Beyond early learning standards reform, states will be expected to adopt evidence-based program quality standards; enhance review and monitoring of program quality; provide comprehensive professional development; develop coordinated screening systems; improve parental supports; create a process for assessing children's school readiness; and use data to improve child outcomes.

Additionally, states that implement a standards-based birth-to-5 early learning system will need to improve classroom environments and invest in an effective, qualified, and well-compensated early childhood workforce. This will involve providing professional development to improve the knowledge and skills of early childhood providers; supporting best practices in the classroom by implementing research-based early learning standards aligned with K-3

curriculum; and funding quality initiatives that improve instructional practices, programmatic practices, and classroom environments.

## **Health Bill and Home Visitation**

Earlier today, the Chairmen of the House Committees on Education and Labor, Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce introduced comprehensive health care reform legislation. The bill details how they would expand coverage, slow the growth of Medicare, raise taxes on high-income people and penalize employers who do not provide health benefits to their workers. They assert that the legislation is consistent with President Obama's overall goals of building on what works within the current health care system by strengthening employer-provided care, while fixing what is broken. They also claim that the bill will ensure that 97 percent of Americans will be covered by a health care plan that is both affordable and offers quality, standard benefits.

The key principles of legislation include, among other things:

- Increasing choice and competition.
- Giving Americans peace of mind.
- Improving quality of care for every American.
- Ensuring shared responsibility.
- Protecting consumers and reducing waste, fraud and abuse.

In the context of improving quality of care for every American, the bill includes support for quality home visitation programs. Specifically, the bill includes \$750 million over 5 years for improving the well-being, health and development of children by enabling the establishment and expansion of high quality programs providing voluntary home visitation for families. Additionally, the bill includes a section allowing for the optional coverage of nurse home visitation programs through Medicaid reimbursements. The bill defines nurse home visitation services as home visits by trained nurses to families with a first-time pregnant woman or a child (under age 2) who is eligible for medical assistance. The goal of expanding optional coverage is to improve maternal and child health, reduce child abuse, and increase economic self sufficiency and school readiness of those served.

## **Expansion of Mental Health Services**

As Health Care Reform comes to a head on the Hill, the education community has identified expanded access to mental health services as a way to address the social and emotional problems that can hinder student achievement. These problems, especially prevalent among low-income students, can significantly hinder a student's chances of success. House health care reform legislation as introduced would require mental health coverage in health insurance plans.

Therefore, it appears that Congress is starting to understand the link between child mental health and academic success.

Additionally, several bills introduced by the 111th Congress would improve access for infants and toddlers to mental health services, including H.R. 2205, introduced by Danny Davis (D-IL), which would expand access to home visitation programs and mental health services. Congress has also been making a push to offer school-based mental health services. This effort includes H.R. 1338, introduced by Barbara Lee (D-CA), which would require the Education Department to make matching grants of at least \$1 million to help states and school districts expand school-based mental health services. Other notable bills on mental health include: H.R. 2531, introduced by Grace Napolitano (D-CA), which would amend the Public Health Services Act to increase access to comprehensive school-based mental health programs by increasing the scope of projects relating to children and violence; H.R. 1361, introduced by Edolphus Towns (D-NY), which would increase recruitment and retention of mental health specialists in low-income LEAs; and H.R. 1710, introduced by Mark Souder (R-IN), which would recognize family therapists as qualified providers of public school mental health services under ESEA.

For more information, visit

[http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press\\_111/20090619/healthcarereform\\_discussiondraft.pdf](http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_111/20090619/healthcarereform_discussiondraft.pdf).

## **Mental Health and Preschool Student Expulsions**

At a recent hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund, argued that expanding physical and mental health care to all children living at 300 percent of the national poverty line could help reduce the number of expulsions. She stated that the lack of access to mental health services and zero-tolerance policies is forcing children out of school. She went on to describe a system of pairing teachers with mental health consultants in order to curb discipline problems and lower the expulsion rate. A recent study by the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale School of Medicine found that expulsion rates in many preschools are significantly higher than those found in the K-12 system. The study also found that classrooms that share a building with a mental health consultant or have at least monthly visits had the lowest expulsion rates. Data from 2001 was used in the study, but programs in Michigan, Kentucky, and Connecticut support the report's findings. Kentucky runs an eight-day teacher training program that provides educators with the skills to work with emotionally challenged, at-risk children. It also has policies that encourage teachers to address behavioral issues instead of simply expelling students, and as a result, the state has zero expulsions. Both Michigan and

Connecticut also have programs that provide mental health consulting and teacher training to address behavioral issues in children before Kindergarten. Michigan has the fifth lowest rate of pre-school expulsion, but Connecticut has the seventh highest.

### **Administration Report on Child Indicators Released**

On Friday, July 10, 2009, the Obama administration held a press conference where they discussed the findings of a new report, "America's Children: Key National Indicators 2009." The report is based on the latest survey data available from 2007. The report found that on the up side, the number of low birth weight births is down; that more high school graduates are completing advanced coursework; and that there has been a decrease in smoking and drinking among 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Less promising were the findings that the poverty rate among children rose to 18 percent; that 17 percent of all children live in households that are "food insecure," (meaning that they do not have a steady supply of food); and that the rate of teen pregnancies has increased. Furthermore, there continues to be a serious health and achievement gap. The report found significant racial and ethnic disparities; specifically, 67 percent of white children are read to at least once a week compared to only 37 percent of Latino children; the percentage of children in poverty at low birth weights is higher among blacks and Latinos than whites; and that asthma occurs in higher rates among blacks and Puerto Ricans. Staff then outlined some of the administration's approaches to correcting these problems.

For more information, visit <http://childstats.gov/> or e-mail [public@who.eop.gov](mailto:public@who.eop.gov).

### **National Research Council Report Calls for More Early Math Education**

A recent report by the National Research Council argues that children can and should be learning math at a much earlier age. The report calls for a major national initiative to improve early childhood mathematics education to ensure that all children enter elementary school with the foundation they need for success. Christopher T. Cross, Chair of the committee that wrote the report, stated that young children's natural curiosity about their environment leads to an enormous potential to learn math, which has so far gone unutilized. Cross sees early mathematics education as key to preparing children, especially those in low-income households, to succeed later in both math and reading.

Up until now, math has been seen as developmentally inappropriate for infants; however, new research suggests that young children are able to think about the world in mathematical ways, with infants as young as 10 months able to distinguish a set of two items from a set of three. The report advocates for making math a primary, and not simply secondary, goal of early education. It suggests focusing early math education on two things: the concept of a

“number” (counting, relative quantities, and basic number operations) and spatial thinking, geometry and measurement. For each content area, the report describes “teaching-learning paths”—sequences of learning experiences in which one idea lays the foundation for the next—which should serve as the basis for classroom instruction. The report emphasizes that a key component of the new national initiative would be providing teachers with professional development about the teaching-learning paths and how to implement a strong mathematics curriculum. It further argued that any serious effort to improve early childhood math instruction will need to include licensure and accreditation processes that assess teachers' and programs' competence in teaching math.

### **FRAC/Afterschool Alliance**

On Wednesday July 8, 2009, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) and the Afterschool Alliance held a congressional briefing, “Hunger After the School Bell: A Briefing on the Congressional Reauthorization of the Afterschool and Summer Child Nutrition Programs.” Jen Rinehart, Vice President of Policy and Research at the Afterschool Alliance, began the hearing by emphasizing that the recession was forcing many summer and afterschool programs to make major cut backs. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), sponsor of S. 990, the AFTERSchools Meals Act, spoke briefly, focusing on the importance of summer and afterschool food programs in closing achievement gaps and reducing summer learning loss. He provided an assurance that as soon as healthcare legislation has been finished his committee would turn its focus to afterschool and summer food programs. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) is also a sponsor of the legislation.

The panel discussion focused on the importance of school food programs beyond simply feeding at-risk children. Crystal FitzSimons, director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs at FRAC discussed FRAC’s recent report which found that states are losing vast amounts of money by not providing enough food afterschool. Because reimbursement is an entitlement program, all the states combined are missing out on \$250 million. Marla Caplon, Food Service Supervisor with the Montgomery County Public Schools focused on the fact that many more students receive free and reduced lunches during the school year than during the summer, and that the greatest restriction on their ability to provide food during the summer is the lack of programs that can physically provide the food. The conference concluded with a few questions emphasizing the importance of expanding these programs, especially into rural areas.

For more information and to read the report, visit [http://www.frac.org/pdf/summer\\_report\\_2009.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/summer_report_2009.pdf).

### **Inaugural Event of the Congressional Baby Caucus**

In May 2009, Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Denny Rehberg (R-MT) announced the formation of a Congressional Baby Caucus. On Tuesday, July 14, 2009, the Congressional Baby Caucus held its Inaugural Briefing focusing on military families and children. The briefing addressed the challenges faced by infants and toddlers in military families, as well as highlighted how public policy can support healthy development of these children. There are nearly 333,000 children ages 0-3 of Active Duty members and their families must face the challenges brought on by deployment, trauma, grief, and loss caused by Service members who have been injured or killed. The Congressional Baby Caucus is committed to working with military families to provide them the tools, resources, and support they need to maintain the healthy parental relationships which are essential to young children's development.

This was the first in a series of briefings that the bipartisan Congressional Baby Caucus will host to examine policy issues and the need to focus on the unique issues affecting infants, toddlers, and their families. The Michigan members of the caucus are Vernon Ehlers (R-3rd MI) and Dale Kildee (D-5th MI).