

July 8, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers:

As organizations that support investments in early childhood, we appreciate that the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2016 provide additional funding for certain early childhood programs, but we remain deeply concerned that they fail to provide sufficient funding—and, in some cases, reduce or eliminate funding—for key early learning programs and other essential supports for children and families. Bipartisan recognition of the importance of investing in early learning is reflected in the increase for Early Head Start included in both bills and the increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant in the Senate bill. However, the Committees' adherence to the sequester cap for non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending means that overall, the bills would undermine effective programs that help give all children the opportunity to reach their potential and contribute to our nation's future prosperity and security.

The House bill does not include the additional funding necessary to implement the important reforms included in the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, which passed with strong bipartisan support last November. This law aims to ensure children's health and safety in child care, improve the quality of care, and facilitate families' access to child care assistance—but it will not achieve these goals without sufficient resources for implementation and to fill the significant gaps in child care access and quality. In addition, both the House and Senate bills eliminate funding for Preschool Development Grants, which are helping states to establish new and strengthen existing prekindergarten program tailored to their own states. The Senate bill provides no increase for Head Start, depriving programs of the resources they need even to keep pace with rising costs.

To provide children with the early learning opportunities that lay a strong foundation for their success in school and life, Congress must provide greater investments in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Early Head Start, Head Start, Preschool Development Grants, and Preschool Grants (Part B Section 619) and Grants for Infants and Toddlers (Part C) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. There is too much at stake and too many children at risk for falling behind to place artificial barriers on our ability to give them the best possible start in life.

In addition to increasing funding for early care and education programs, Congress must lift the NDD caps so that these increases do not come at the expense of other programs that provide crucial help for families. We urge Congress to begin bipartisan negotiations that raise these caps in order to allow for the investments in health, education, and other supports that enable the nation's children and families to thrive and make it possible for them to contribute to a strong economy now and in the future.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
American Psychological Association (APA)  
Blacks in Law Enforcement of America  
Center for Community Change Action  
Child Care Aware of America  
Child Care Law Center  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Leadership Council  
CLASP  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Common Sense Kids Action  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
Easter Seals  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
First Five LA  
First Five Years Fund  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Futures Without Violence  
Generations United  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Make it Work Campaign  
MomsRising  
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Association for Family Child Care  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Child Abuse Coalition  
National Children's Facilities Network  
National Head Start Association  
National PTA  
National Black Child Development Institute  
Nemours Children's Health System  
National Women's Law Center  
Parents as Teachers  
Partnership for America's Children  
RESULTS  
Save the Children Action Network  
Spark Action  
Teaching Strategies  
ZERO TO THREE