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July 13, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Committee on Education and the
Workforce
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and the
Workforce
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Senator Murray, Chairwoman Foxx and Representative Scott:

On behalf of the nation's governors, we write to encourage support for strengthening the state-federal partnership on early childhood education. For governors, education and care for our youngest learners is equally important to our nation as health care, tax reform and investments in infrastructure. We urge Congress to build on the recent reauthorizations of the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Child Care Development Block Grant by elevating the federal government's support for state progress on early childhood education, during the 115th Congress.

For states, early childhood education is early workforce development. Governors recognize that a quality experience for our youngest learners lays a solid foundation for a skilled workforce, a strong economy, and a healthy society, now and in the future.

Every dollar of current federal investment in early childhood education and child care is critical to augment state efforts to construct and maintain this foundation. However, current federal programs and investments in early childhood must be programmatically aligned, focused on quality, and updated to maintain the pace of state-level early childhood innovation. A redesign of the federal early childhood education system would allow for these state-driven ideas to thrive.

Just as governors have leveraged the entirety of state government to improve the delivery of early childhood education and child care programs, Congress is uniquely positioned to refresh and rework the current patchwork of federal early education and child care programs to build on cutting-edge state programs – not operate separately from them.

Congress can make early childhood education and child care a priority in the 115th Congress by:

- Reauthorizing current federal early childhood education programs together to allow greater coordination, alignment, flexibility and equity among state and local programs.
- Considering any proposed new early childhood education and child care programs or tax credits in regard to how they will complement current programs.

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- Redesigning the structure of existing federal early childhood education programs to:
 - discontinue the current siloed approach common across all programs;
 - focus on programs that serve children statewide;
 - plug into state accountability and quality rating systems; and
 - connect with programs in every state that serve learners from birth into their careers.
- Refraining from using funding mechanisms that would ultimately lead to a reduction in quality or federal support for early childhood education and child care.
- Prioritizing the unique needs of the populations served by the 44 federal early childhood education programs as alignment, redesign and consolidation are considered.
- Exploring opportunities for early childhood alignment and support in federal social safety net programs, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Placing governors and states at the center of the state-federal early childhood education structure to reflect their role as the caretaker of the entire educational system and the chief economic development officer in each state.

This is not only the wish of governors, but also the American people. In a recent First Five Years Fund [national poll](#), 82 percent of registered voters support strengthening the state-federal partnership on early childhood education, including 70 percent of Republican voters and 94 percent of Democratic voters.

Governors are listening and continuing to bring creativity and commitment to their budgets, laws and initiatives to promote school readiness, advance equity and combat the cycle of poverty during early childhood – even in tough fiscal environments and the Great Recession.

This Congress, it is time for federal early childhood education and child care programs to be updated to reflect the leadership of states and scale their efforts. Programs like Preschool Development Grants, where states are in the driver's seat for innovation, are a new model for federal early education governance.

Governors look forward to working with you to prepare our youngest learners for a successful and productive life.

Sincerely,



Governor Brian Sandoval
Vice Chair
National Governors Association



Governor Jay Inslee
Vice Chair
Education and Workforce Committee