

March 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The following organizations, which support strong early learning experiences for young children and efforts to give parents to the opportunity to work, are pleased that the Senate is considering S.1086, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, and thank you for your leadership in moving the bill forward. This legislation places a focus on the importance of access to affordable, quality child care for children, families, and our nation's economy.

Since the Child Care and Development Block Grant was last reauthorized in 1996, we have learned much about how to improve the quality of child care and after-school care and how to make child care assistance more accessible to families, from both research and innovative state approaches. This bill incorporates lessons from the research and states in an effort to better protect the health and safety of children in care, improve the quality of care overall and for infants and toddlers in particular, facilitate children and families' sustained access to help paying for care, promote stable child care arrangements, and support providers serving families receiving child care assistance.

While we strongly support the goals of this legislation, achieving these goals will require additional resources. These resources would be a worthwhile investment because stable, high-quality child care enables parents to work and children to learn and grow. Yet 260,000 fewer eligible children received assistance through the Child Care and Development Block Grant in 2012 than in 2006, according to a recent study by the Center for Law and Social Policy. In addition, payment rates for child care providers have stagnated in most states. To reverse the decline in children served and to successfully implement the much-needed improvements included in this legislation, we urge Congress to increase mandatory and discretionary child care funding.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance  
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children

American Psychological Association  
Child Care Aware  
Children's Defense Fund  
CLASP  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Early Childhood Policy Research  
Alliance for Early Childhood Finance  
Fair Share  
First Five Years Fund  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Futures Without Violence  
groundwork  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
MomsRising  
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds  
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)  
National Black Child Development Institute  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Child Abuse Coalition  
National Children's Facilities Network  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National PTA  
National Respite Coalition  
National Women's Law Center  
Parents as Teachers  
Prevent Child Abuse America  
Service Employees International Union  
Stand for Children  
Teaching Strategies  
United Way Worldwide  
YWCA USA  
ZERO TO THREE