
Investments in Early Childhood Education Bring Returns for Everyone

We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we wait until they reach school age—a time when it may be too late to intervene. Learning is a dynamic process and is most effective when it begins at a young age and continues through adulthood.¹

—James Heckman, Ph.D,
Nobel Laureate in Economics

Historically, the federal funding for early childhood education has been a critical investment in our national priorities of education and family economic security. These programs help families afford child care, help states and local programs improve the quality of early childhood education programs and services, and support families in promoting their children’s healthy development and learning. Recent polls show that the public, on a bipartisan basis, overwhelmingly support a strong public investment in early childhood education.² Under current funding levels, the unmet needs of children and families remain significant:

- Only one in six eligible children receives child care assistance that helps families work and children be safe and supported in learning and development.
- Less than half of eligible preschoolers can enroll in Head Start, which provides school-readiness and comprehensive services.
- Less than four percent of eligible babies and toddlers can enroll in Early Head Start, which ensures a positive developmental foundation for young children.
- Many children with developmental delays and disabilities are unable to receive early intervention services because of inadequate funding of Part C of IDEA.

Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2015:

- Provide at least \$817 million in mandatory and discretionary funding increases proposed in the Administration’s budget request. Both the Senate legislation and the proposed new regulations for the **Child Care and Development Block Grant** set important requirements for better health and safety, professional development, and family awareness of child care options. These requirements will need additional mandatory and discretionary resources to implement quality improvements and help more families afford child care.

¹ For more information on the economic returns, go to www.heckmanequation.org

² For more information on the polls, go to www.readynation.org

- Increase funding for **Early Head Start, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, and Head Start** so that more children from families with low incomes have access to comprehensive development and early learning programs. Fund the President's early childhood initiatives to expand Early Head Start and high-quality child care for children from birth through age 3 and to provide state-federal cost-sharing partnerships to expand high-quality prekindergarten programs to 4-year-old children, targeted to serving children under 200 percent of poverty. Congress should provide the full proposal in the President's budget request, which would improve quality and expand the number of eligible children served.
- Enact and provide designated mandatory funding for the **Strong Start** preschool proposal and a designated revenue source that will yield \$75 billion over 10 years, allowing states to accelerate their efforts to provide high-quality preschool for children in families earning under 200% of poverty.
- Expand the number of states that can receive a **Preschool Development Grant** to build capacity of and expand the number of children in high-quality preschool with the requested \$500 million discretionary increase.
- Extend the voluntary home visiting program that supports families as their children's first teachers. The **Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting** program will expire September 30, 2014 if Congress fails to reauthorize it. The funds go to evidence-based programs that help families ensure a successful start for their very young children's healthy development. Congress should provide expansion funds and a designated revenue source that would yield \$15 billion over ten years to support more families with young children.
- Improve **Pell Grants and loan forgiveness for student financial aid to complete two and four-year college degree programs**. As a low-wage field, student financial assistance to earn a degree and then loan forgiveness to remain in the early childhood education field are critical. Congress should increase the Pell Grant and fund loan forgiveness/cancellation so that early childhood educators can meet higher qualifications and remain in their programs.