

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Chairman Lamar Alexander
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Patty Murray
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 26, 2015

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

As you work to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we urge you to include significant new investments to support quality early childhood learning programs that build on the infrastructure already in place in current law and in states and communities. Expanding high-quality early learning programs that prepare young children to succeed is essential to achieving the ESEA goals of ensuring that all children graduate from high school, college and career ready.

Since the last ESEA reauthorization, a growing number of states have established or expanded early learning opportunities for children from birth through age five. Governors from both parties and across the nation have pushed for expansion of early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged three and four year olds, because the return on investment is clear. Children who have the advantage of early learning go on to be healthy, wealthy, and productive adults. In 2014, 28 states increased their investment in early learning. This year, governors across the political spectrum have continued to recognize both the need and the effectiveness of focusing on our youngest learners by proposing increased funding for early learning in their budgets.

But State governments can't do it alone. Last year, 35 states applied for the Preschool Development Grant program to facilitate the creation, improvement or expansion of their pre-K programs for our most at-risk children, including Tennessee and Washington. Congress has recognized the critical need for increased investments in early childhood education and has supported these efforts the last two years through appropriations. To ensure ongoing progress is not lost, States need a funding source that can provide sustained investments, helping build and expand quality school-, community-based, and mixed delivery early learning initiatives.

The ESEA has a long tradition of bipartisan federal-state-local partnerships in education, particularly for disadvantaged children. As reauthorization moves through the legislative process, we urge you to take advantage of the opportunity to support a stronger partnership that increases access to high-quality early learning programs and

strengthens the continuum of education from infancy through college and career. We look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

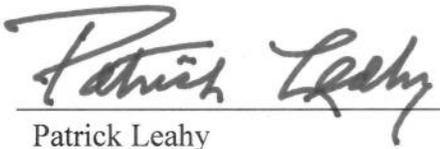
Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.



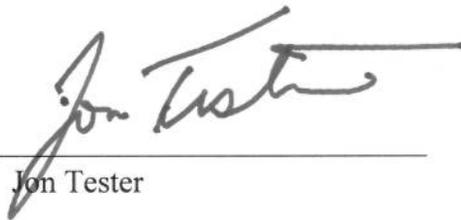
Mazie K. Hirono



Patrick Leahy



Kirsten Gillibrand



Jon Tester



Sheldon Whitehouse



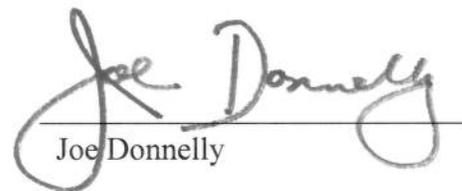
Tammy Baldwin



Al Franken



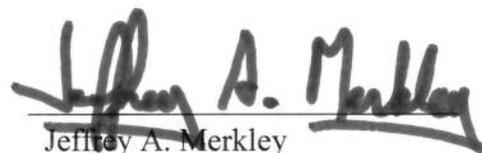
Richard J. Durbin



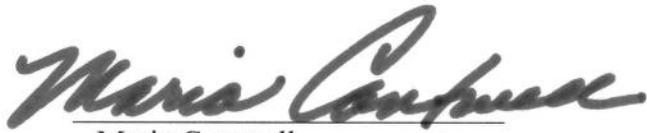
Joe Donnelly



Jack Reed



Jeffrey A. Merkley



Maria Cantwell



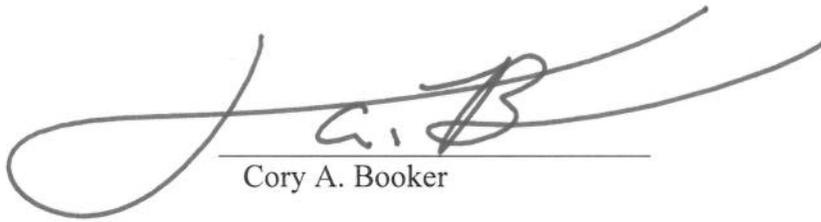
Barbara A. Mikulski



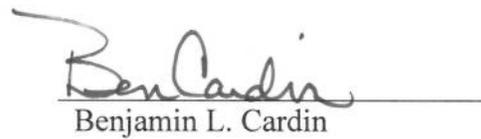
Charles E. Schumer



Heidi Heitkamp



Cory A. Booker



Benjamin L. Cardin



Michael Bennet



Bill Nelson



Richard Blumenthal



Claire McCaskill



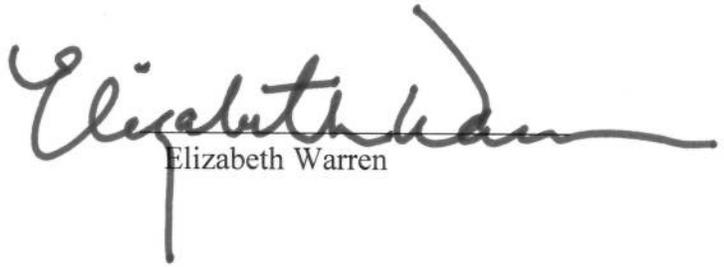
Gary C. Peters



Edward J. Markey



Christopher A. Coons



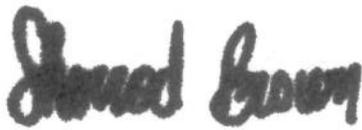
Elizabeth Warren



Martin Heinrich



Thomas R. Carper



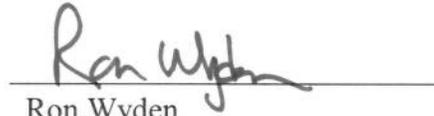
Sherrod Brown



Tim Kaine



Brian Schatz



Ron Wyden



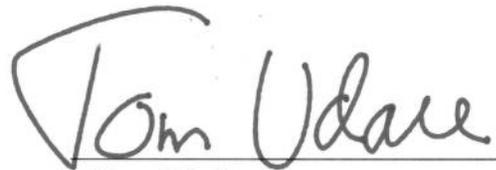
Christopher S. Murphy



Mark Warner



Jeanne Shaheen



Tom Udall



Barbara Boxer



Joseph Manchin III



Bernard Sanders



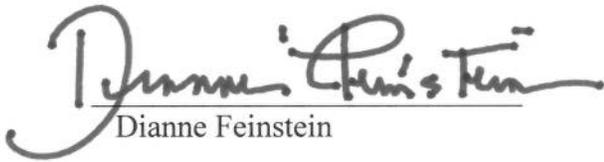
Robert Menendez



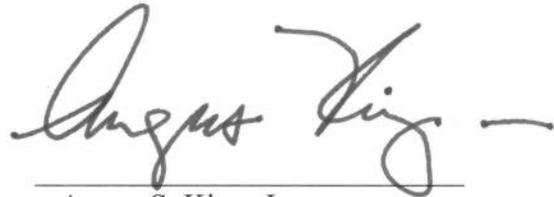
Debbie Stabenow



Harry Reid



Dianne Feinstein



Angus S. King, Jr.



Amy Klobuchar