

NBCDI's Statement on the Plan to Provide High-Quality Early Education for All Children



"We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance."

- President Barack Obama, The State of the Union, 2013

NBCDI, along with many of our partners in early care and education, was delighted to see significant attention paid to early childhood education in President Obama's State of the Union address. We were also encouraged by the subsequent release of his plan to invest in a continuum of high-quality early learning experiences for all children, beginning at birth and including:

- Extending evidence-based voluntary home visiting;
- Launching a new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership through competitive grants to support communities' abilities to expand the availability of Early Head Start and child care providers that can meet high standards of quality for children birth through age three;
- Providing high-quality preschool for every child with a federal-state partnership using a cost-sharing approach with states and requiring states to meet quality benchmarks;
- Encouraging full-day kindergarten; and
- Continuing to invest in Head Start to support a greater share of infants, toddlers and three-year-olds.

There is no question that participation in high quality early care and education, which provides stable relationships with responsive caregivers and supports emotional, social, physical and cognitive development, can lead to strong social competence, the ability to establish and maintain relationships, and readiness for school.ⁱ In fact, research has repeatedly demonstrated that high-quality preschool can have strong positive short- and long-term effects, particularly for low-income children and children of color.ⁱⁱ

Helping families, especially low-income families, access high-quality early care and education from birth through the early grades costs money – at least in the short-term. In the long run, of course, it saves money, as taxpayers reap the benefits of lower special education costs, less remedial education, fewer teen pregnancies, and lower rates of incarceration.ⁱⁱⁱ

NBCDI supports the idea that increased investments should go to programs in a mixed delivery system that provide high-quality care and education – but substantial funding should also be available to help programs move up the quality ladder through both environmental improvements and professional development. Indeed, because teacher-child relationships make the most difference in child outcomes, funding should be directed towards increasing the quantity, quality, affordability, efficacy, flexibility and cultural relevance of professional development, training and higher education programs for new teachers and for the existing early childhood workforce, many of whom have worked heroically for years to care for children in their communities.

As we work in a bipartisan way across the country to build and invest in an early childhood system that effectively and successfully allows children to learn and parents to work, we encourage taking what we know works and building a foundation in which culturally competent staff across early childhood settings are engaging in strengths-based practice with high expectations in order to achieve positive outcomes for all of our children and invest in our country's economic future.

ⁱ J. Ronald Lally (2010) School Readiness Begins in infancy

ⁱⁱ Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R.L., Maldonado-Carreño, C., Li-Grining, C., & Chase-Lansdale, P.L. (2010). Child care and the behavior problems of economically disadvantaged children in middle childhood. *Child Development*. 81, 1460-1475.

ⁱⁱⁱ See www.centeronthedevelopingchild.org and <http://www.heckmanequation.org/>