

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Rogers:

The Senate and House Committees on Appropriations have each approved separate spending bills for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2016. We were disappointed to learn that both bills eliminate funding for the Preschool Development Grants program, which helps states create or expand existing preschool programs to increase access to high-quality preschool. We urge you to reconsider eliminating this important funding as we continue to see the benefits of investing in early childhood education.

There is a tremendous unmet need for high-quality early learning throughout the country. Currently, fewer than three in ten 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program, and many states do not have the resources to provide such opportunities to the children most at-need for these programs. In 2014, 18 states out of 36 applicants were awarded federal four-year Preschool Development Grants. However, funding was only provided for the first year of the grant program. Cutting funding in the Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations bill will immediately impact the plans of these 18 states to continue forward in their efforts to improve and increase access to preschool in their state. The Department of Education estimates that 48,000 fewer children would be served if this funding is eliminated in Fiscal Year 2016.

Every public dollar spent on high-quality preschool returns up to \$16 through a reduced need for spending on other services, such as remedial education, grade repetition, and special education, as well as increased productivity and earnings for these children as adults. These benefits are particularly strong for children from low-income families. Furthermore, law enforcement leaders consistently state that children who have early learning opportunities are less likely to be involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, benefitting both the children and their communities in later years.

We believe that a strong investment in the Preschool Development Grant program will allow states and school districts to further expand access to high-quality learning opportunities, which positively affects both the lives of these children and our communities.

We therefore strongly urge you to consider reinstating funding this important and impactful program and we thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Casey, Jr.

David Vitter

Mazie Hirono

Tammy Baldwin

Maria Cantwell

Jack Reed

Martin Heinrich

Al Franken

Brian Schatz

Gary C. Peters

Kirsten Gillibrand

Angus S. King, Jr.

Tim Kaine