



June 18, 2007

The Hon. Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, HELP Committee, US Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy:

As the Congress moves to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, we urge the Senate HELP Committee to make several important changes in that legislation to strengthen the preparation of early childhood educators. It is vital that the Committee and the Congress build on the progress they have already made in fully incorporating early childhood educators as a part of our national commitment to providing high-quality teachers at every level of a child's education.

We recommend that the Congress make pre-k teachers eligible for relief of federal Perkins and Ford loans on equal terms with their K-12 colleagues by modifying sections 460 and 465, respectively. We also advise that the Stafford loan relief articulated in Section 428K be extended to include pre-k teachers as well as child care professionals. Finally, the Congress should ensure that pre-k teachers are eligible for TEACH funding by inserting appropriate language in 465(a)(2)(A), which currently limits the application of funding to elementary and secondary school teachers.

We ask you to update Title II to incorporate pre-k and K-12 teacher training and recruitment. Programs for supporting educational partnership grants and teacher recruitment must be changed to include pre-k by modifying Sections 203 and 204, respectively. The accountability provisions and funding authority in Title II should be updated as well to reflect the expanded presence of pre-k in the legislation through Sections 206 and 210.

Please contact us or federal fellow Matthew Smith (msmith@preknow.org) if we can provide any additional information on the important work of assuring that all of our children are able to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. We look forward to working with you and your staff as the Higher Education Act moves through the process of reauthorization.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Libby Doggett in black ink.

Libby Doggett, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Kathy Patterson in black ink.

Kathy Patterson
Federal Policy Director

CC: Members, HELP Committee, US Senate