

Help our Children Arrive at Kindergarten Ready to Learn

Cosponsor the Ready to Learn Act

July 17, 2007

Dear Colleague:

Research has shown the early years are critical in a child's development and that pre-kindergarten education offers benefits that extend through the first years of school and beyond. Children who attend high-quality pre-k programs are less likely to be held back a grade or to need special education, and they are more likely to graduate from high school. They also have higher earnings as adults and are less likely to become dependent on welfare or involved in crime.

In today's current education system, it is not unusual for children to arrive at kindergarten already behind their peers. Nearly 50 percent of all kindergarten teachers report that at least half of their students come to school with problems that hinder their success. One in every six kindergartners needs specialized one-on-one tutoring or special instruction in a small group. Each year, more than 200,000 children repeat kindergarten.

The *Ready to Learn Act* will help prepare children for kindergarten by providing funding for states to establish high-quality early learning programs to promote school readiness for four year olds in their state. Funding will be allocated to states through a competitive process to establish and administer voluntary preschool programs while allowing governors to build on pre-existing early childhood systems. Schools, child care entities, Head Start programs, or other community providers of pre-kindergarten programs are all eligible for subgrants.

To ensure high-quality programs that properly prepare children to be ready to learn, state plans will require qualified teachers, a developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning curriculum and support for professional development.

Supporting our children and early childhood education are critical to keeping America competitive. For additional information or to cosponsor this important legislation please contact Mildred Otero of Senator Clinton's office at 4-6369 or Amy Blair of Senator Bond's office at 4-1475.

Sincerely,



Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton



Senator Christopher Bond