



November 26, 2008

Members of the Transition Team:

Congratulations to President-Elect Obama, and best wishes as you work to get the new administration off to a strong start. At The First Five Years Fund, we appreciate President-Elect Obama's commitment to early childhood education, and we know that the new administration will work to strengthen and expand early learning opportunities, despite a challenging budget and a host of competing priorities.

We appreciate that the fresh thinking President-Elect Obama will bring to early childhood policy is rooted in two longstanding tenets of federal early childhood investment: Hold a strong commitment to quality, and focus on at-risk children. Research tells us what works, and we know that President-Elect Obama will want to ensure that federal investment is effective in improving outcomes for young children. With limited resources, the federal government's greatest impact can come from ensuring that its investment addresses the needs of those children who are youngest and most at-risk.

We also welcome the concepts articulated in the "Obama-Biden comprehensive 'Zero to Five' plan," particularly the plan's emphasis on early education and care for infants and toddlers, and the focus on state birth-to-five systems. Federal investment must effectively leverage state and private funds, which in turn should lead to improved state-federal collaboration. Only through an effective federal-state partnership can states implement comprehensive systems to provide early education and care to children aged birth to five.

As a candidate, President-Elect Obama also talked about the importance of finding new strategies for improving early learning opportunities for at risk children. We strongly support his vision for a federal early learning council, similar to the council he helped to create in Illinois. We also strongly support his pledge to significantly increase funding for Head Start – particularly Early Head Start – as well as child care.

We recognize that you have a great deal of work to do during the coming months and many important policy priorities to address. Nonetheless, we believe the new administration has an opportunity to be an historic champion for our nation's youngest children. We share President-Elect Obama's commitment to early learning and stand ready to assist you in developing and implementing legislation to advance our shared values.

Sincerely,

Cornelia Grumman  
Executive Director  
First Five Years Fund