



November 11, 2013

The Honorable George Miller  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2205 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-0511

Dear Representative Miller:

On behalf of the more than three million members of the National Education Association and the students they serve, we would like to thank you for your leadership in introducing the *Strong Start for America's Children Act*, which promotes high-quality early learning opportunities for children from birth until age 5. NEA is proud to support this vitally important legislation that would establish a new federal-state partnership to accelerate progress already underway and help states fund high-quality prekindergarten for 4-year olds from low-income families, encourage states to support prekindergarten for 4-year-olds from moderate-income families, and encourage learning opportunities for even younger children – for example, through partnerships with Early Head Start programs.

The first years of a child's life – when the brain is still forming – are a vital window of opportunity. [Research](#) shows that children who attend high-quality prekindergarten programs are less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, need special education, or get in trouble with the law later on. Such quality programs play a critical role in putting a child on the path to success – in school and in life – so every child should have access, not just children whose parents can afford to pay.

High-quality prekindergarten programs also bring enormous economic benefits. They can pay for themselves in as little as one year and, over decades, save the states and the federal government billions of dollars. Investments in high-quality preschool can carry eventual benefit-to-cost ratios as high as 8-to-1. (Source: Economic Policy Institute)

We do wish to note that our members strongly believe that prekindergarten should be provided primarily by public entities whenever possible. Criteria should be designed to ensure program quality – including application of the same non-discrimination and non-proselytizing requirements to public and private prekindergarten that currently exist in federal laws such as Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) – and preserve the principle of church and state separation when it comes to the use of federal funding.

Investing in our youngest children is investing in our nation's future. We thank you for your leadership in bringing forward this groundbreaking legislation and look forward to working with you to advance it.

Sincerely,

Mary Kusler  
Director of Government Relations