



Senator Harkin
731 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Miller
2205 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: CLASP Support for Strong Start for America's Children Act

Dear Senator Harkin and Representative Miller,

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is pleased to endorse the Strong Start for America's Children Act, which provides for universal access to high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children through a federal-state partnership and expands quality child care for infants and toddlers.

"CLASP applauds Senator Harkin and Representative Miller for introducing this important legislation. The Strong Start for America's Children Act is a giant step forward for expanding quality early education," said Olivia Golden, Executive Director of CLASP. "In a country where one in four of our youngest children lives in poverty and fully half live in low-income households, we simply cannot afford to ignore any longer the existing gaps in access to high-quality early learning experiences that ensure our youngest children are equipped to succeed."

"Far too few low-income children are without access to quality early education programs. The bill provides much-needed resources and a framework for addressing access barriers," said Hannah Matthews, Director of Child Care and Early Education at CLASP. "In addition, the bill raises the bar for quality in state preschool programs, another important improvement for young children."

High-quality early education experiences are widely recognized as key to preparing young children for school success and improving the lifetime employment and earnings of low-income children. In addition to children and families, our society as a whole bears a large cost burden for children not equipped to succeed in life. The Strong Start for America's Children Act would contribute to rebuilding the middle class and help equalize the opportunities our children have at the starting gate.

Specifically, CLASP supports the following components of the bill that would advance high-quality, comprehensive early care and education systems across the country by:

- Setting clear expectations for high-quality services including high staff qualifications and developmentally appropriate and evidence-based curricula and learning environments.
- Providing critical supports to increase the educational attainment of the early childhood workforce.

- Addressing the needs of low-income working families by allowing for the provision of pre-kindergarten services in schools, Head Start and child care settings and establishing expectations for the provision of full-day services and comprehensive health services.
- Providing for partnerships between Early Head Start and child care programs to ensure that more vulnerable infants and toddlers have access to the comprehensive early education and family support services that are the hallmark of Head Start.

Sincerely,

Olivia Golden
Executive Director

Hannah Matthews
Director, Child Care and Early Education

