

**EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY LEARNING:
THE STRONG START FOR AMERICA'S
CHILDREN ACT**

HEARING

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

**EXAMINING EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY LEARNING,
FOCUSING ON THE "STRONG START FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN ACT"**

APRIL 10, 2014

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EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY LEARNING: THE STRONG START FOR AMER- ICA'S CHILDREN ACT

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tom Harkin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Harkin, Alexander, Murray, Casey, Franken, Whitehouse, and Murphy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARKIN

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will please come to order.

I want to thank, first of all, all of our witnesses for being with us today to examine the Strong Start for America's Children Act, a bill that will greatly expand access to high quality early learning experiences for children from birth through kindergarten.

I introduced this bill last November along with Congressman George Miller and Congressman Richard Hanna on the House side. Already, it has received broad support from more than a quarter of the members of both the Senate and the House. The bill enjoys bipartisan support in the House but, unfortunately, is supported on only one side of the aisle here in the Senate and, of course, I am hopeful that that situation will change through the process of our hearings and mark-up.

This legislation has received support from organizations that you would expect to be associated with early childhood bills—early childhood advocates, and professionals, and researchers—who have dedicated their professional lives to the study of what is developmentally appropriate for children. But Strong Start also has support from retired generals, top business leaders, law enforcement organizations, local chambers of commerce, pediatricians, and other health professionals. They are all urging us to invest in high quality early learning for very young children.

As a matter of fact, I remember when we had our press event for rolling out the bill, Congressmen Hanna, Miller, and myself, and there were others there. There was the Sheriff of Hennepin County, MN, whom I did not know, but he had been invited, and he was the last speaker, and he was in his sheriff's uniform, and he introduced himself as the Sheriff of Hennepin County. He said,

“But more importantly, I am the person you pay later. I am the person you pay later if you do not invest in early childhood education.”

In drafting this legislation, we learned from the success of States that have developed systems of early childhood development and education, particularly for preschool-aged children. We talked to researchers to make sure our proposals have a solid basis in evidence. We talked to organizations representing Governors, and school districts, teachers and community-based early learning providers to make sure that what we put together can be successfully implemented on the ground.

Last month, when I was in Iowa for a field hearing on early childhood learning, we visited a preschool in Des Moines, the Mitchell School. Their staff was well-trained, they had small class sizes, and used developmentally appropriate curricula. But here is the catch: because of inadequate funding, they could only offer preschool for only 3 hours a day. So people are coming there, dropping their kids off, 3 hours later, they had to have somebody come and pick them up. Research strongly indicates that a full day of preschool yields far better results for children than just a couple of hours.

On a practical level, as I said, a part-day structure can make it tough on families who have to knit together transportation and childcare arrangements to make preschool work. So this bill would help States, like Iowa and others, to offer full-day programs for children so that parents do not have to think about picking up their kids just a couple of hours after they have dropped them off.

Some argue that we have a proliferation of early learning programs and we should determine how to better coordinate them. I agree with that, which is why in the Strong Start bill, we ask States to coordinate and align their efforts. Others argue that we should simply look to the Child Care and Development Block Grant that we recently passed as the answer to early childhood education.

I would like to make it clear that, while I am proud of our efforts to reauthorize that longstanding program, the bill that passed the Senate made only modest changes to improve a childcare program that had not been reauthorized in 18 years. So it is really a bill that is 18 years old or more, and we authorized it with modest, minor changes. The problem is, we know a lot more today than we did 18 years ago.

The most frustrating argument is that we already invest a significant amount of money in early childhood and that new investments are not needed, but I think reality suggests otherwise. Given that only 1 in 6 children eligible for childcare subsidies receive them, 1 in 6; fewer than half of children eligible for Head Start receive its services; and fewer than 1 in 20 infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start have access to those programs, 1 in 20. So to say that we have already invested a significant amount is just not so. We can, and should, do more to ensure that young children are given every opportunity to have access to quality early learning opportunities.

Currently, 43 States offer preschool. Indiana was among a few States that did not provide State-based support for preschool; but, recently, Governor Pence was able to advance a measure to get the

State started in providing preschool. As Governor Pence put it, “This is our shining moment to get out there and say, ‘Yes, we are crazy about kids and we want to support these initiatives,’” and I agree with that.

I am eager to work with any Senator who is willing to be a part of this legislative effort. But I just do not think we can wait any longer to take action on what, I believe, is one of the most important issues over which this committee has jurisdiction. So accordingly, we will have our hearing. I look forward to having mark-up sessions on this legislation next month, May. That is sort of the process that we will go through.

And now, I will yield to Senator Alexander for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome to the witnesses. We are glad you are here and appreciate your coming.

Today’s hearing, as Senator Harking said, is about his proposal, which mirrors the President’s proposal. I believe there is a better way to do it, and I am developing legislation that would implement that, and hope it will be considered when we have our committee mark-up next month.

There is not any question about whether early learning is important. That question is: what is the best, next step? What is the best way to do it? And I believe the best way to do it is to provide States with the flexibility to use some or all of the more than \$22 billion in Federal money that we already spend on 45 different early childhood education programs, and allow States to use it in the way that best meets their needs.

We learn a lot from our witnesses such as you are. Earlier on this subject, the Louisiana Superintendent of Schools, John White, talked about his State’s effort, and what they were doing to provide the basic conditions for parents and children to have quality choices and access to preschool education.

He explained the greatest barrier, in his words, to implementing the pre-Kindergarten program for children zero through four in Louisiana, one that meets the basic conditions, is not necessarily funding but, “The fragmentation of our country’s early childhood education system.”

He used Head Start as an example. He said that \$120 million of Federal funding going to Louisiana annually for Head Start,

“Skirts State-level input, virtually institutionalizes fragmentation, and guarantees incoherence and access to quality for parents, and teachers, and children alike.”

According to the Government Accountability Office, which issued its report in 2012, the Federal Government already funds 45 different early childhood and preschool programs, including 33 that permit the use of funds to provide support of related services to children from birth through age five, and 12 programs where the explicit purpose is to provide childhood and preschool or childcare services. So a total of 45 programs plus 5 tax provisions that sub-

sidize private expenditures in the area of early childhood and preschool programs.

This year, Congress appropriated more than \$15 billion for the 12 programs that are explicitly focused on early childhood. That includes \$8.6 billion for Head Start; \$250 million for Race to the Top; \$790 million in grants on Disabilities Education Act; \$5.3 billion on the Child Care and Development Block Grant; and then there is another \$3 billion a year on early childhood and preschool tax credits and exclusions for employer-provided care.

One of our witnesses, Dr. Whitehurst, has estimated that when you add up the other 33 programs that indirectly support early childhood and preschool programs or childcare, the total Federal spending in this area is more than \$22 billion a year today. That is a lot of money.

That is about the same amount that the U.S. Department of Education spends on K through 12 education through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is about the same amount of money that I propose we take from our Federal education dollars from K through 12 and create a \$2,100 scholarship for 11 million low-income children. It is a lot of money that we are spending today. We are not spending it as well as we could. And in addition, States spend another \$5 billion on preschool education, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, and add to that local and private spending.

The General Accounting Office says this has created a, "Fragmentation of effort, some overlap of goals of activities, confusion among families and other program users."

So what should we do? I suggest that what we did with the Child Care and Development Block Grant should be a guide. First, the program enabled, instead of mandating. It enabled parents to go to school or work. It pays for their childcare while they do that.

Second, it is a voucher. It enables parents to choose that childcare.

Third, it is a grant to States. It gives the States the flexibility to say what the Louisiana Superintendent said he wanted to do.

If that were our guide, what could we do with this \$22 billion dollars we already spend? Tennessee's share would be about \$440 million. If given that kind of flexibility, we could increase the number of childcare vouchers from 39,000 to 139,000. Or, we could expand the State-funded voluntary preschool program from 18,000 to 109,000 children. Or, we could expand Head Start from about 17,000 3- and 4-year-olds, to 56,000 children.

What we should not do is fall back into the familiar Washington pattern of a grand promise, lots of Federal mandates, and sending the bills to Governors to pay in the end.

The bill that we are talking about today, Senator Harkin's bill, has \$27 billion in new funding over 5 years, but it has many expensive Washington mandates which, in effect, create a national school board for preschool education.

I hardly have time to list them all. Washington would decide the ages of children to be served; staff qualifications; teacher salaries; maximum class sizes; length of the school day; vision, dental, and health screenings; nutritious meals; physical activity programs;

health and safety standards; development-appropriate standards and curriculum. All that would be decided here, not locally.

This is an extremely expensive requirement that would require States to expand their activities, and they would need to develop and implement performance measures and targets on school readiness, readiness gaps, special education placements, grade retentions, more and more provisions looking like a national school board.

We have millions of children who need this kind of early education. We can do better than create a national school board through 45 programs plus one more. And then, send the bill to the States. The States would pay only 10 percent of the cost in the first year, but that would rise to 50 percent, and then you have got the maintenance of effort provision which is already causing States to struggle. This is the same Medicaid model that I saw as Governor. Medicaid was 8 percent of the State budget when I was Governor; today it is 30 percent.

I suggest that we do have an alternative. That we should take the advice of our witnesses, at least some of them, and say that the right way to take the next step is to spend the \$22 billion Federal dollars we are already spending in a way that enables States and parents to choose the very best early childhood experience for their child.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Alexander.

I will just introduce our witnesses, and then we will start. I will introduce them first, then we will have you make your opening statements.

I want to thank all of you for participating. All of your statements will be made a part of the record in their entirety. I read them over last evening. They are great statements, each one of them.

Let me first start by welcoming our first witness, John Pepper. Mr. Pepper is the former chairman and CEO of Procter & Gamble. Currently, he serves on the advisory board of Ready Nation, an organization of business leaders who work to strengthen the economy through proven investments in children.

Over the past 25 years, Mr. Pepper has devoted himself to early childhood and youth development. He was a founder of Every Child Succeeds, an organization that provides home visitation to at-risk children from birth through age three, and is a cofounder and member of the executive committee of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, one of the Nation's most successful mentoring and tutoring organizations. Mr. Pepper, thank you for being here.

And now, I am going to yield to Senator Whitehouse for purposes of an introduction.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR WHITEHOUSE

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be able to introduce a Rhode Island witness to the HELP committee, Hon. Angel Tavares, who is the 37th mayor of our capital city, Providence. I have known the mayor for many years now, and I am very proud of his service and his dedication to our capital city and to the State of Rhode Island.

Mayor Tavares can personally attest to the importance of Head Start and early childhood education. His life journey from Head Start through Harvard to becoming the mayor of our capital city exemplifies the opportunity that Head Start has provided to millions of children across our country, and thousands of children in our home State of Rhode Island.

I am particularly proud of Providence for many reasons: our diverse neighborhoods, our strong community ties, our historic buildings, our world-class restaurants and academic institutions, our artistic flare. I could go on and on, but I think you get the point.

Providence is a pretty special place and it has been a special place in education as well, first under mayor, and now Congressman Cicilline, and then and now under Mayor Tavares.

In 2012, Mr. Chairman, Providence was 1 of just 14 communities across the entire United States to be designated as an all-American city by the National League of Cities because of the mayor's plan to ensure all students are reading on grade level by third grade.

And Providence Talks, which is an early intervention program designed to boost vocabulary development for low-income children, recently won the \$5 million grand prize from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge out of a field of over 300 applicants.

Today, you will hear a unique perspective about Head Start from an elected leader of a major American city who is a living example of the benefits of early childhood education. His story is proof that a strong start can empower students to pursue and achieve their dreams.

I am pleased to have the chance to introduce Mayor Tavares today, and welcome him to our committee.

And thank you for the privilege of introducing him, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse and Mayor Tavares, we welcome you here. Your leadership in Providence has been well noted, not only in Rhode Island, but around the country, and we thank you for being here to share your experiences, and what you have done in Providence, and your own personal background.

Next, I would like to introduce Dr. Steven Barnett. Dr. Barnett is the Board of Governors' professor of education and director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. His research includes studies on the economics of early care and education, including costs and benefits, the long term effects of preschool programs on children's learning and development, and the distribution of educational opportunities.

For several years, Dr. Barnett has led the publication of the widely heralded series of State preschool yearbooks, providing annual State-by-State analysis of progress in public pre-K. Dr. Barnett, we welcome you also.

And finally, I would like to welcome Dr. Russ Whitehurst. Dr. Whitehurst is the Brown chair in education studies, senior fellow, and director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution. His work at Brookings focuses on choice and competition in education, teacher effectiveness, accountability, and pre-school services.

Dr. Whitehurst was the first director of the Institute of Education Science, and is widely acknowledged as making important contributions in that position to the quality of education research, and we welcome you here also, Dr. Whitehurst.

We will start, Mr. Pepper. As I said, your statements will be made part of the record.

I just want to note that at 10:30 we have a vote and so where we are at that time, we will recess for a few minutes while we run over. It is just one vote and then we will be back to pick it up.

Mr. Pepper, please go ahead and proceed as you so desire.

STATEMENT OF JOHN E. PEPPER, JR., RETIRED CHAIRMAN AND CEO, PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY, CINCINNATI, OH

Mr. PEPPER. Thank you very much, Chairman Harkin, Senator Alexander, Senator Casey, and Senator Whitehouse.

I look forward to being here today because I am talking about a subject that I, personally feel, has more to do with the future of our Nation and our economy than any other single initiative we could be talking about.

I come here at the age of 75 deeply worried about the future of our Nation and our continued failure with whatever means are needed to provide quality early childhood development for all our youngsters, 0 to 5. And if we do not do it pretty soon, we are going to have a big problem in this Nation, expanding from what it already is.

As you heard, I am the former chairman and CEO of P&G, I am also the former chairman of the Walt Disney Company, and part of the Ready Nation organization. I am finding that business leaders today in larger numbers than I have ever seen before are deeply concerned about scaling what we know works in the area of early childhood education. Why? There are a number of reasons that you well know, and I will cover them briefly.

People are worried and getting tired of talking about a growing skills gap; an inability to find people who can fill the jobs that need to be done today. We have all learned by now that the growth of the brain from 0 to 5 is about 90 percent of what happens. We are also learning that what happens during that period of time has everything to do with what happens afterwards, and how ready a child is to enter kindergarten has predictable consequences whether they are ready to read by the end of the third grade, and that has predictable consequences on whether they will dropout.

We know from a myriad of studies that this pays out and in financial terms, as somebody in business, what I call is the financial no-brainer. The only question is how strong is the return on investment? You will see 2 to 1, 5 to 1, 10 to 1. I do not believe the 10 to 1s, but I have seen enough and gone over enough studies to feel that this is something that is rare in business, and that is something with enough evidence that you get behind it and make it happen on a scaled basis.

I would emphasize the concern that I and others have about our global position. It is not like we are the only people who know this is important and 90 percent of the children in most Western European countries are already receiving, 90 percent, quality early K. China has advanced a plan that will have 70 percent of their 3-

and 4-year-olds by the year 2020 receiving not 1, not 2, but 3 years of quality pre-K education.

This is a new world and unless we take positive action, whatever that means may be to get this scaled from where it is today, where maybe 1 out of 4, or 1 out of 5 children are getting what they need, we have a cancer in this Nation.

Finally, we are now very encouraged by this. The public is getting it. We have done research studies in southwestern Ohio, we have done them nationally, and got 85 percent men and women in this country of all parties saying all children should have quality pre-K. People are ahead of the legislators.

Fortunately, and I have studied this, I think we do have a piece of legislation in front of us in the Strong Start for America that has a great deal that is right about it. We have done a lot of work in the business community seeing what we can rally behind. These are elements of this bill that we like.

It clearly recognizes the leadership role of the States and of the money needed to go through. And, yes, as Senator Alexander says, we have got to coordinate money at the State level so it is efficiently done, including the private sector.

It is voluntary. It is voluntary for the States. It is voluntary for parents. It does not do mandates. It sets reasonable, and this could be argued, quality standards. Now, maybe there is something that needs to be worked there; I am not the expert. It focuses on children most in need and one thing I love about it is it takes the whole of continuum of 0 to 5 and does not bifurcate this into different silos.

You could say, "Let the States do it," and many are progressing—cities like Denver—but it is my fear that unless there is Federal support of the right kind, our progress—despite the valiant effort of cash-strapped States—is going to be incremental and far too slow to achieve the improvement that we need.

I am sure that most everyone will agree with the substantive points about the need for quality early childhood education, and there could still be some debate about how it works, though I think the body of evidence is really compelling. But there will be the concerns about the cost. Can we afford all this? Where will we find the money? And believe me, I take these concerns seriously, and I do not trivialize the response to them. We are talking about a lot of money, and we have a big deficit to deal with.

However, in response to those fiscal concerns, I would say two things. First, if I could draw a comparison with my business career, Procter & Gamble, I would say we are faced here, as we in business sometimes are, with a transformational investment opportunity; transformational. It is one being demanded, I submit, by our consumers, in this case, the public. It is being pursued by our competitors, in this case, other Nations, though I hope they are also allies. And it is critical for the long-term success, and indeed I believe the variability, of a company, or in this case our Nation and our economy. Furthermore, based on the best conservative estimates I have seen, it pays out. It comes back, I think, at least 2 to 1.

That, folks, is an investment which we as executives in a business would take as our responsibility to make. To figure out how

to make it happen and not do it sometime in the future when we have worked through all the things, but do it real fast, because every year we pass without doing it is another generation of kids. And yes, of course, we need to make it as sound as possible in the execution, but we ought to get about that with a sense of urgency.

One last part on the cost, I think it has to be put in the context as all of you would of our total Federal budget. I have got no idea how much money will eventually be put behind this. He said \$27 billion over 5 years; that is about \$5 billion a year. But if one were to say it would end up in the range of \$5 to \$10 billion per year; that would represent a fraction of Federal spending; less than 1 percent of total discretionary spending; less than one-quarter of 1 percent of the total Federal budget.

I do not make light of those numbers. They are easy to use, but they are a relative piece of perspective, it seems to me, and I would submit in terms of the long-term importance of this to our Nation of not having a quarter, 30 percent of our kids growing up not ready to do it, and we know that fact. We need to act on what we know to be true and that is find a way to get this scaled in the next few years so it is not 25 or 30 percent, but it is 80 or 90 percent.

I hope and pray, having been down here in Washington on this subject more than once that the way will be found to get a bipartisan piece of legislation about on this soon and not waiting for some whole new presidency or something. And get something done, which all of you know, we have got to do, and that is get this quality education development to all of our kids.

I thank you for letting me express these deeply felt convictions and hopes, and I will stop there.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pepper follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN E. PEPPER, JR.

SUMMARY

ReadyNation/America's Edge is an organization that includes dozens of current and former CEO's dedicated to strengthening our companies, our economy and our Nation through proven investments in children. Providing quality early development and education to our children—especially the most vulnerable—will determine the future of our Nation and its economy more than any other initiative we can take.

Business leaders are deeply worried about the current and growing skills gap—an inability to find individuals with the skills our companies now require. We know we are not going to close that gap unless we start early to prepare our children for academic success, as 90 percent of brain development occurs by age 5. This early development determines a child's readiness for kindergarten, which greatly affects their likelihood of future academic success.

I support the Strong Start for America's Children Act. I believe the Federal Government has a crucial role to play in jump starting the effort and funding at the State and local levels to bring to scale programs that work. We know that high quality early childhood development and education programs are a sound fiscal investment. Based on the most conservative cost estimates available, this investment will pay for itself with an ROI of at least 2:1.

The Act contains specific provisions which business leaders like myself embrace, including recognizing the leadership role of the States, providing the flexibility to direct funds to multiple delivery systems, setting reasonable and needed quality standards, demanding accountability, and maintaining voluntary participation, at both the State and the individual level.

Various polls have consistently shown that the majority of the American public support these programs and our international competitors are pursuing similar investments. While the cost of this bill warrants serious consideration, we are faced here, as we in business occasionally are, with a "transformational investment oppor-

tunity.” Without such Federal support I fear our progress, despite the valiant effort of cash-strapped States, will be far too slow to achieve the improvement in scale we need.

Failing to meet the need for these services has an impact on our global competitiveness. The Strong Start for America’s Children Act is an opportunity to truly change the landscape of how our youngest children are educated, with potentially far-reaching consequences for the long-term viability of our Nation and its economy.

I hope you will act in a bi-partisan fashion to advance this legislation so that we do develop the more skilled and educated workforce that will fuel our economic growth and keep the United States as a leader in our competitive global economy.

Good morning Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, members of the committee and guests.

Thank you for inviting me here today. I am grateful for this opportunity to present my thoughts to you today because I believe that providing quality early care and development to our children, especially the most vulnerable, will determine the future of our Nation and its economy more than any other initiative we can take.

I speak to you as the former chairman and CEO of Proctor & Gamble and as a member of Ready Nation/America’s Edge, an organization that includes dozens of current and former CEO’s dedicated to strengthening our companies, our economy and our Nation through proven investments in children.

Why are business leaders speaking out as never before in support of quality early childhood education? There are several reasons:

1. We are deeply worried about the current and growing skills gap—an inability to find individuals with the skills our companies now require.

Driving these gaps are the rising education requirements for jobs of the future. Experts predict that of the 55 million job openings through 2020, 65 percent will require post-secondary education. Yet nationwide, 20 percent of our high school students fail to even graduate on time and the rates of high school graduation in impoverished areas are generally much worse.

2. We know we are not going to close that gap unless we start early—90 percent of brain development occurs during the ages 0–5.

In order for American businesses to compete successfully in a global economy, employees must have the knowledge, skills and abilities to be communicators, collaborators and critical thinkers. Research confirms that the foundation for these social and fundamental education skills is developed during a child’s earliest years.

The first 5 years of life are a unique period of brain development, which lays the foundation for life-long learning. The achievement gap starts to open as early as age 2 or 3, when research shows that low-income children know half as many words as higher income children. Children also show a significant achievement gap in math by kindergarten entry. And early math skills predict later skills in both math and reading. By the time children reach kindergarten, they are not only far behind in vocabulary, but on pre-literacy and pre-math skills as well. This disparity can hurt our ability to build the science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce that our country so urgently needs.

3. We know that being ready for kindergarten has everything to do with what follows and we know that we have proven programs that get kids ready.

A longitudinal research study in my own region of southwest Ohio shows that 86 percent of kids who were ready for kindergarten were reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. Only 59 percent of kids who were not ready for kindergarten were reading on grade level. “So what?” someone might ask. Kids not reading on grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out than those that are; and 11 times more likely if they are poor.

High-quality early childhood education can prepare children to start school ready to learn. It can bring student performance up to grade level, boost graduation rates, and lead to a greater likelihood of attaining a 4-year degree and being employed consistently. Recent studies of high quality State programs demonstrate that early childhood education programs—if they are of high enough quality—can deliver solid results.

By the time at-risk children in disadvantaged districts served by New Jersey’s 2-year pre-kindergarten program reached the 4th and 5th grades, they were three-quarters of an academic year ahead in math, compared to their peers who did not attend, and two-thirds of an academic year ahead in literacy. Attending preschool also cut the likelihood of being held back in school by 40 percent and the likelihood of needing special education services by 31 percent.

State programs in Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and others also showed positive academic gains. These recent studies reinforce long-term studies of high-quality early education programs that show impressive education outcomes:

For example, a long-term study of the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan tracked two groups of children in a randomized study. Children who participated in the program were 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school.

Children who participated in the Abecedarian early learning program in North Carolina were four times more likely to graduate from a 4-year college and 42 percent more likely to be consistently employed as adults.

A long-term study of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers found that participants in the pre-K program were 29 percent more likely to have graduated from high school.

4. We know from myriad studies that high quality early childhood development and education programs are a sound fiscal investment.

In business, we rarely have the luxury of making an investment decision with as much evidence as we have to support the economic value of investing in early childhood development and education.

Long-term studies show that high-quality early learning programs cut crime, welfare and other societal costs so much that they save money. A study by Steve Aos of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) found net economic benefits of \$22,000 per child served.

Put bluntly, in my terms, they are a financial no-brainer. The only question is "how strong is the ROI?" The answer: Two or three or more to one. It is rare that we in business have as much evidence on the economic value of an initiative as we have on investing in early childhood development and education.

5. The unmet need for these services and the impact on global competitiveness.

Other countries are doing far more than we are in supporting the development of our youngest. Today, less than half of our 3- and 4-year-olds are in quality pre-K programs. Yet, some other developed countries are covering 90 percent of their children. And it's not only "developed" countries. China has committed to having 70 percent of its 3- and 4-year-olds receiving not 1, or 2 but 3 years of pre-K by the year 2020.

The sad truth is that in 2012, more than half of our States served 30 percent or fewer of their 4-year-olds. Another 10 States did not even have State pre-school programs.

Given the strong research, it is easy to see why parents across the country want to get their children into high quality pre-school programs. Unfortunately for many, high quality pre-K is as out of reach as college tuition. Early learning programs that meet high-quality benchmarks cost an average of \$9,000 per child, per year, depending on the State. That can be as much as in-State tuition at public universities, which is way beyond what many working families can afford for their preschoolers.

And while policymakers, educators and parents in many States would love to see quality pre-K offered to more children, virtually all face financial challenges that are making that very difficult.

We need public investments, from State and Federal sources, to help families afford pre-K. States that have been working hard to do the right thing for their families have been making progress, but it's such an issue of national interest that it needs to be a State *and* a Federal priority.

Given what we know about the positive impact of early development and the huge gap we have today in providing it, this will be a long-term cancer until we scale proven programs to all children in need.

6. Finally, we are advocating strongly for this because we know the public wants it.

Various polls have consistently shown that the American public agrees on the importance of all children having the benefit of quality pre-K. A recent poll found more than 85 percent think that ensuring that children get a strong start should be a national priority. A majority support adding revenue to fund it.

THE STRONG START FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN ACT (S. 1697)

Fortunately, we have an opportunity before us to truly change the landscape of how our youngest children are educated.

The Strong Start for America's Children Act, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin, would create and fund a State-Federal partnership that would enable States across the country to provide high quality pre-K for 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families in the Nation. It would also expand access to high-quality early development programs from birth through age 3.

I am glad the Strong Start for America's Children Act is in front of you. I believe the Federal Government has a crucial role to play in jump starting effort and funding at the State and local levels to scale programs that work.

I am very pleased that this Act contains specific provisions, which business leaders embrace:

1. It recognizes the leadership role of the States, providing flexibility to direct funds to multiple delivery systems at the local level, including the private sector;
2. It is voluntary, for the States and for the parents;
3. It sets reasonable and needed quality standards and it demands accountability;
4. It focuses on children most in need; and
5. It provides support for the entire 0–5 development continuum.

Without such Federal support I fear our progress, despite the valiant effort of cash-strapped States, will be far too slow to achieve the improvement in scale we need.

Many people are understandably concerned about the cost of such programs in a time when budget cuts are the norm. But failing to invest in children when they are very young means a higher cost to society, and business, down the road.

I take these concerns seriously, and I wouldn't trivialize a response to them. We are talking about a lot of money, and we have a big deficit to deal with. However, in response to such fiscal concerns I would say two things.

First, if I could draw a comparison to my business career, we are faced here, as we in business occasionally are, with a transformational investment opportunity.

It is one being demanded by our consumers (the public), it is being pursued by our competitors, and it is critical to the long term success and perhaps very viability of the company—or in this case the Nation and its economy. Furthermore, based on the most conservative cost estimates available, this investment will pay for itself at least 2:1.

That ladies and gentleman is an investment which we as executives would take as our responsibility to make; we would find a way to do it, and do it now—not later, obviously being sure that it is as sound as possible in its execution.

Also, the cost of this program, it seems to me, has to be put in the context of the total Federal budget. While I have no idea of the amount of funding that would eventually be attached to the programs enabled by his Act, if it were to be, say, in the range of \$5–\$10 billion per year, that would represent a fraction of Federal spending—less than 1 percent of total discretionary spending and approximately one-quarter of 1 percent of the total Federal budget.

I respectfully submit that viewed in the perspective of its long-term importance to our country, we should not flinch from figuring out how to make it happen.

CONCLUSION

Business leaders are in good company when it comes to recognizing the value of high quality early childhood development and education. Parents, educators, and policymakers around the Nation are strongly in support of it. There is also a growing coalition of leaders from the military, law enforcement, and faith communities that have joined business leaders in support of providing high quality services in this area.

I support the Strong Start legislation, particularly the increased level of Federal resources and ability of States to structure services in a way that makes sense locally, within broad, widely recognized parameters of quality. This program needs to be a true partnership between the Federal and State governments.

I hope you will act in a bi-partisan fashion to advance this legislation so that we do develop the more skilled and educated workforce that will fuel our economic growth and keep the United States as a leader in our competitive global economy.

I thank the committee for allowing me to express these deeply felt convictions. I believe that providing a quality start for all our children is the moral and social and economic issue of our generation. It is altogether clear that it is critical to offsetting the depressing impact of poverty on a child's ability to fulfill his or her potential.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Pepper. I can assure you that this committee has always worked in a bipartisan fashion. In fact, we are pretty proud of the things that we have done in the past couple of years here with both sides, and I am sure that we can put our heads together on this effort too. That is why we are going to work together to try to get us as much of a bipartisan bill

as we possibly can. We are going to try our best. We can assure you of that.

Mayor Taveras, welcome to the committee, your leadership is well known on this issue. Please proceed.

Mr. TAVERAS. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanking Senator Alexander and Senator Casey, and I would like to say special thank you to Senator Whitehouse for the introduction and for his representation of Rhode Island here in the Nation's capital.

If I could, Mr. Chair, I would like to deviate for one moment to just point out one personal thing and that is that I sit before you today as mayor of the city of Providence, RI. My first involvement in public service, and certainly with being elected to office, was campaigning for a wonderful Senator from Iowa in New Hampshire in 1992.

I thank you for being an example for me and for many, many others for years to come.

The CHAIRMAN. We are all allowed at least one political mistake in our lifetime.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ANGEL TAVERAS, MAYOR
OF PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE, RI**

Mr. TAVERAS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to really speak for the children that this Act is intended to help.

As has been mentioned, I am a Head Start baby. My parents are from the Dominican Republic, did not go to high school, and came to New York City in the 1960s looking for a better life. I was born in 1970 and raised in Providence, and I was in Head Start because my mom knew of the program and was able to put her young child in Head Start. It has made a very big difference in my life.

In fact, when I was a student at Harvard, I spoke to my roommate from Poughkeepsie, NY and he was a Head Start baby. And we talked about that and we noticed that a lot of the students, particularly minority students at Harvard that we knew, were all Head Start graduates. And at that time, back in the late 1980s, early 1990s, we said, "There must be something about that program." We did not know the research. We did not know the data, but we thought it was interesting that so many of us had been involved in Head Start early on. That has been something that has influenced me as mayor of the city of Providence and one of the reasons I have focused so much on early childhood education.

Right now in the city of Providence, two-thirds of our kids are showing up for kindergarten already behind on national literacy benchmarks and we need to change that. That is why in the city, I have decided to focus, as Senator Whitehouse mentioned, on the early years of life, 0 to 5, as the Chairman has pointed out previously. Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg and Bloomberg Philanthropies, we now have a program that is designed to reach all of our children in the city of Providence and focusing with parents on how important it is to talk to your child. How much is going on in the first 5 years of life for your child. How the brain is developing and the vocabulary is expanding.

I am proud to tell you that the program is well underway. We have already seen changes, positive changes, in the behavior and the development of the children where they are hearing many more

words, and we know that this is going to help further down the road as they enter kindergarten. And so, we are very grateful for that opportunity.

In addition, we are working on pre-K because we know that it is the best investment that we can make. We have a pilot program in Rhode Island. We are looking to expand it and this type of legislation will help us to do exactly that. It will give us the flexibility to expand it and to grow it, to invest the money now early on, so that we do not have to pay later as the chairman mentioned earlier. And so, this legislation is extremely important for that as well.

The last thing that I would say to you is that grade level reading and the witness talked about that a little bit earlier; one of the best predictors that we have for future success, is whether a child is reading at grade level by third grade. We were fortunate enough to be an All-America City for Grade-Level Reading 2012.

There are three components to grade level reading. The first is early childhood education, making sure that we expand early childhood opportunities for our children. The second is chronic absenteeism, making sure that children are in school and not chronically absent. And the third is summer learning loss and combating that, making sure that we have that.

What you are doing here really has a chance to impact children across this country and give them an opportunity to one day sit here on this side of the table or there, and talk to others about the journey that they have traveled, and open and create opportunities to make sure that all of our children have a chance to succeed.

Thank you, and to the committee for the work that you are doing, I look forward to working with you on this.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Taveras follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ANGEL TAVERAS

Chairman Harkin and Honorable Members of the committee, my name is Angel Taveras and I have the honor of serving as the 37th Mayor of the city of Providence, RI. It is my distinct pleasure to join you today and provide testimony in support of the Strong Start for America's Children Act.

Mr. Chairman, I applaud your leadership in drafting this legislation and want to echo something you said when introducing the bill: "The investment we make as a nation in early learning will pay dividends for generations to come."

I'm living proof of that statement. Let me begin by sharing with you a little about my personal story. I am a proud Head Start graduate. I grew up on the South Side of Providence, in publicly subsidized housing, where I was raised by a hardworking single mother who worked second shift in Rhode Island factories to support my sister, my brother and me.

I graduated from the Providence Public School system. I often credit my third grade teacher Mrs. Donaldson for encouraging me to pursue my passion of becoming an attorney despite having few role models in my life to emulate. Thanks to her and the countless other educators who supported me along the way, I attended Harvard University, the Georgetown University Law Center and in 2011 was inaugurated as the first Latino Mayor of the city of Providence.

I can say with confidence that the success I have enjoyed as an adult would not have been possible without the tremendous support I received as a young person and specifically the access that I had to quality early education. That is why I am so glad to be here today to speak in support of the legislation that is before your committee.

The Strong Start for America's Children Act would launch a 10-year Federal and State partnership designed to expand and improve early learning opportunities for America's youngest learners. Specifically, this legislation would create America's *first Federal funding formula* for high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-old children for families earning up to 200 percent of the Federal poverty level. And importantly, this legislation does not sacrifice quality in the name of expanding ac-

cess: participating States must ensure that educators are highly qualified, that student-teacher ratios are low and that instruction is grounded in evidence and developmentally appropriate practices.

The Chairman and other committee members are aware, but I feel it bears repeating: early childhood education is critically important for the development of our young people *and* the communities in which they live. Studies have demonstrated that participation in pre-kindergarten programs help young people develop important cognitive, behavioral and problem-solving skills. Pre-kindergarten graduates are more likely to attend college, maintain a full-time job, and have health insurance. According to the Economic Policy Institute, lifetime economic benefits realize a return-on-investment of as much as \$11 for each dollar invested. It is no surprise, therefore, that 89 percent of Americans surveyed say it is important to make early education and child care more affordable for working families.

As Mayor, I have made early childhood learning a top priority for my administration. Our efforts to ensure that every child is reading on grade level by the end of third grade have won Providence distinctions from the National Civic League, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, America's Promise Alliance and other civic organizations.

Last March, I was proud when the city of Providence was named the Grand Prize winner in the 2013 Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge. Our winning initiative, "Providence Talks," responds directly to research that shows that children growing up in low-income households hear up to 30 million fewer words than their middle- and high-income peers by their fourth birthday. In Providence, we know that approximately two-thirds of our kindergarten registrants arrive behind on national literacy benchmarks on the very first day of school. Thanks to a \$5 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Providence is empowering parents and caretakers with the tools and resources necessary to understand and strengthen their household auditory environments.

Rhode Island launched its first State-sponsored pre-kindergarten program in 2009. By most accounts, the program has been a tremendous success: according to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Rhode Island's State pre-kindergarten meets all 10 benchmarks for quality standards. But while Rhode Island maintains a high quality program, unfortunately access is severely limited: only 1 percent of Rhode Island's 4-year-olds are enrolled in our State-financed preschool program, compared to highs of 74 percent in Oklahoma and 65 percent in Vermont, and a national average of approximately 28 percent of 4-year-olds enrolled in State-financed pre-kindergarten programs.

I know that the sad and simple truth is that if we choose *not* to make investments in the critical years of early development, we will pay for them down the line in the forms of remedial instruction, reduced economic productivity and criminal justice costs.

In conclusion, I urge the committee and all your Senate colleagues to make the critical investments in early childhood education as called for in the Strong Start for America's Children Act. Children in Providence, RI, and throughout the Nation cannot wait for future leaders to take action: they demand that we take action now to ensure that they have access to the same life-changing opportunities that so many of us enjoyed as young people.

On behalf of young people in the city of Providence and in the State of Rhode Island, I strongly encourage the committee's full support for the Strong Start for America's Children Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee, and I am happy to answer questions from the committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mayor. Appreciate that and we will look forward to working with you.

And now, the buzzer has gone off. We do have a vote. I am going to wait and hear Dr. Barnett's testimony, then I will take a break. Did you want to go beforehand and then come back and take over from me?

Senator ALEXANDER. I would like to hear him. What would you like to do?

The CHAIRMAN. Can we go ahead and do that now before we go? Let us do that.

Senator ALEXANDER. OK.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Barnett, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF W. STEVEN BARNETT, Ph.D., DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

Mr. BARNETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

I am pleased to testify before you this morning. Thanks for the introduction. I would like to add, as an economist, I have studied investments in early learning and development for some 30 years now, and did the first benefit cost analyses based on data, actual data through adulthood for the period preschool and Abecedarian studies which, I am sure, you have heard of.

Strong Start for America's Children Act has a strong scientific foundation. The first 5 years are a time of rapid development during which good education can significantly strengthen the foundations for later success in school and life. And yet, many American children enter school poorly prepared to succeed, in part, because few attend good preschools.

Often, parents earn too much to qualify for public programs, but too little to afford high quality private preschool. And many public programs are inadequately funded to provide quality, even for those children in poverty.

Funding per child in State preschool programs has been declining. In fact, it is down over \$1,000 per pupil in the last decade, and access to good preschool remains lowest for those children who would benefit the most.

Comprehensive reviews of the evidence including statistical summaries or meta analyses find that preschool programs can produce lasting effects on learning and development. Strong preschools contribute to school and life success including increased achievement and educational attainment, decreased behavior problems and crime, increased earnings and even better health.

As preschool is just the first lap in a longer race, strong programs are designed to produce very large initial effects to offset diminutions in effect size after school entry. It is a misnomer to call this diminution, fadeout. Some effects persist and much of the decline is likely due to, first, compensatory efforts by schools for children who did not attend preschool. And second, benefits to preschool for whole classes in subsequent grades including the children who did not go to preschool.

For example, when fewer children enter a kindergarten class needing remedial help or disrupting classes, every child in the classroom, including those who did not go to preschool, are now in control groups.

Fortunately, some programs produce larger effects than others and we know the features of highly effective programs. These include: well-educated, adequately paid teachers focused on explicit instruction; small classes and a high teacher-child ratio to increase one-on-one and small group time; comprehensive standards for learning and teaching with an aligned curriculum; and strong support for teachers through a continuous improvement system that includes evaluation, reflection and planning, coaching and supervision.

Head Start provides one example of the effectiveness of this formula. After the National Impact Study in 2002, Head Start was re-

formed. Data collected from 2003 to 2009 show these reforms worked. Head Start teacher qualifications and language and literacy practices in the classroom improved, so did children's gains in language and literacy.

New Jersey's Abbott Preschool Program provides an even stronger proof of the principles embodied in Strong Start. By implementing these principles for all 3- and 4-year-olds in 32 school districts, State policy dramatically raised the quality of participating providers; Head Start, private and public school, all working together in the same system.

The result has been dramatic increase in quality, substantial and persistent increases in children's test scores, most recently measured at Grades 4 and 5, and large reductions in grade repetition and special education through Grade 5. These results are similar to those produced in the Perry Preschool and other model program studies.

I would like to invite the chair and other members of the committee to visit these programs in New Jersey, see what high quality preschool looks like, see the positive consequences for children, families, and communities when all children are offered an excellent preschool education.

Some 2,000 years ago, a teacher asked in the Sermon on the Mount, "If your child asks you for bread, would any of you give him a stone?" In America today for preschool children, the answer too often is, "Yes." Our children deserve better. We know the right answer. Let us act accordingly.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barnett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF W. STEVEN BARNETT

SUMMARY

The *Strong Start for America's Children Act* has a strong scientific foundation. Too many American children enter school poorly prepared to succeed. The first 5 years are a time of rapid development, when high quality early education could significantly improve school readiness and later success. However, few children have access to high-quality preschool, and current public programs have insufficient resources to support quality for even those in lower income families. Funding per child in State preschool programs has been moving in the wrong direction, and access to high quality preschool is lowest for those who would benefit most.

Comprehensive reviews of the evidence, including multiple statistical summaries of the research findings, demonstrate that preschool programs can produce strong and lasting effects on learning and development. These, in turn, contribute to improved school and life success, better health, and other positive adult outcomes, including increased achievement and educational attainment, decreased behavior problems and crime, increased earnings, and better health.

To counter the diminution in effects after school entry preschool programs should produce large initial effects. However, it is a misnomer to call this diminution "fade-out," partly because some effects persist, but also because much of the decline is likely due to compensatory efforts by schools for children who did not attend preschool and the ways in which preschool benefits entire classes in subsequent grades whether or not they attended preschool.

Some programs produce larger effects than others, and we know the features of highly effective programs. These include well-educated, adequately paid teachers; small classes and a high teacher-child ratio; comprehensive standards for learning and teaching that are also embodied in the curriculum; and strong support for teachers through a continuous improvement system that includes an emphasis on evaluation, reflection, and planning with coaching and supervision.

Head Start is more effective than is generally acknowledged and has been significantly improved since the National randomized trial of children who attended Head

Start in 2002 that found modest effects. The National Impact Study underestimated effects because of the study design, but important lessons can be learned from the results of reforms since 2002. Data collected in 2003, 2006, and 2009 show large increases in the size of Head Start children's language and literacy gains, at the same time that the program raised teacher qualifications and improved practices regarding language literacy.

New Jersey's Abbott preschool program provides a demonstration proof of the principles embodied in *Strong Start*. By implementing these for all 3- and 4-year-olds in 32 school districts, State policy dramatically improved the quality of preschool education. The result has been substantial and persistent gains in children's test scores, most recently measured at grades four and five, and large reductions in grade repetition and special education through grade five. These results are similar to those produced by model programs with similar characteristics.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm pleased to testify before you. My name is Steven Barnett. I direct the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University where I am a Board of Governors Professor of Education. As a unit of Rutgers University, NIEER conducts, archives, and disseminates research to inform policymaking regarding early childhood care and education. I am an economist, and I have studied investments in early learning and development for more than 30 years, including publishing with colleagues the first benefit-cost analyses of the economic returns to the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs, based on actual data from preschool to adulthood. In addition, I am the lead researcher on an annual survey of State preschool policy that has collected data on access, quality standards, and funding for more than 10 years.

The scientific basis for the *Strong Start for America's Children Act* overall is extensive. It is well established that the first 5 years are a time of rapid development that is sensitive to a child's experiences. It is equally well established that many young children have less than optimal conditions for their development, with those whose parents have the lowest incomes and least education most disadvantaged (Barnett & Lamy, 2013; Nores & Barnett, in press). This problem is not limited to children in poverty; indeed an unacceptably high percentage of children from middle-income families are poorly prepared to succeed in school and are far too likely to fail a grade and to drop out of high school.

Yet, rigorous studies find that educational programs over the first 5 years can meaningfully enhance early learning and development, and thereby produce long-term improvements in school success and social behavior that generate benefits to individuals and the broader society (Barnett, 2008, 2011). Positive outcomes found in rigorous studies include increased achievement, decreased grade repetition and special education, increased educational attainment, decreased behavior problems and crime, decreased risky behaviors like teen pregnancy and smoking, and improved health (Barnett, 2008; Campbell, et al., 2014).

My brief remarks today will be limited to just one part of *Strong Start*—high-quality preschool education for children at ages 3 and 4. Although adequately investing in every year of a child's life is important, I focus narrowly on current public support for such programs, what is known about the effects of high-quality preschool education, and what should be done to produce substantive gains for children in large-scale public programs.

Although some might point to a proliferation of public policies supporting preschool education, in fact there are only 3 large sources of support for preschool programs—child care subsidies, including the Food Program; Head Start; and State-funded pre-K programs (Haskins & Barnett, 2010). Taken together, they are insufficient to support quality preschool education for even those 3- and 4-year-olds below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Only about half of American children attend any kind of preschool program at ages 3 and 4, and for about 30 percent this is a publicly supported program (Nores & Barnett, in press). Moreover, most programs that children attend are not high quality. Even families with relatively high incomes who purchase private preschool do not, for the most part, find good programs.

Over the last decade, the only real expansion has been in State-supported pre-K for 4-year-olds and much of this has been through adoption of Head Start and private programs (Nores & Barnett, in press). In some States, that has meant that the quality of these programs was substantially improved, but in others it has not. Standards are too low and there is far too little money in the system across all programs to support high quality, educationally effective programs (Barnett & Carolan, 2013).

This situation is unfortunate and calls for change. Comprehensive reviews of the entire literature on preschool program effectiveness, including statistical summaries—often called meta-analysis—find that high-quality preschool programs have substantial positive impacts on cognitive development and on a variety of other child outcomes, including school success and socio-emotional development. They also find that even when cognitive advantages decline after school entry, they do not disappear. As I will explain, it is not accurate to characterize this pattern entirely as “fade out.”

The research is clear that if society wishes to produce substantive long-term gains for children from preschool education, public policies must support high-quality programs that produce relatively large initial impacts. Therefore, it is important to ask what program features are associated with larger gains. A recent comprehensive meta-analysis (Camilli, et al., 2010) found that explicit instruction and an emphasis on working with children one-on-one and in small groups was associated with larger cognitive gains. It also found that providing comprehensive services, such as health and family services, was associated with smaller cognitive gains. I interpret this finding as indicating that trying to do too much with too little can result in losing a focus on strong teaching, which must be at the core of a successful preschool education program. Based on the meta-analysis, moderate improvements in these aspects of program design could greatly enhance long-term program effects.

Another meta-analysis found that average estimated effects have declined in more recent studies (Duncan & Magnusson, 2013). Possible explanations include: older research more often studied intensive model programs; it has become more common for control groups to attend another preschool program; and, State funding for quality has declined, potentially weakening public programs. For example, the well-known Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs had adult-child ratios of 1 to 6 or 7 which has not been replicated in public programs. Head Start evaluations have included in the control group children who attended State pre-K, which did not exist when older Head Start studies were conducted. Perhaps most worrying, NIEER’s annual survey of State-funded preschool programs finds that funding per child declined by more than \$1,000 over the last decade, and it would be surprising if that had not undermined program quality and effectiveness (Barnett & Carolan, 2013). Some of the largest State pre-K programs serving the most children, including Florida and Texas, have especially low-quality standards.

Despite its advantages, meta-analysis is at best a blunt instrument for identifying the features of highly effective programs. Another approach is to ask what those programs that produced very large long-term gains for children have had in common. Frede (1998) reviewed the model programs that produced large impacts and found that they shared a use of reflective teaching practices, a strong emphasis on language development, and a school-like discourse pattern including initiation-reply evaluation sequences and categorization. These practices, and intensity and continuity of teacher-child interaction, were facilitated by a highly developed curriculum, training and professional development, reasonable ratios, and strong monitoring and supervision. To this can be added levels of teacher qualifications and compensation comparable to that in the public schools. All of the programs that have been found to produce large long-term gains in rigorous studies have had these features. There are no counter-examples in rigorous studies of preschool programs with less-educated teachers, large classes, and poor pay producing large long-term gains in children’s learning and development.

I do not mean to suggest by this that current public programs are typically ineffective, or that their benefits do not exceed their costs. First, public preschool programs, almost without exception, are found to improve academic readiness for school, sometimes quite a lot. Second, there is substantial evidence of persistent impacts on achievement well beyond school entry, even though these are somewhat smaller than short-term impacts. Some slippage between initial and later effects should be expected for any preschool program (Barnett, 2011). High quality preschool prepares children to start off well. It does not guarantee that nothing later interferes with their progress. In addition, to the extent that schools focus more resources on children who are behind to help them catch up—an emphasis no doubt accentuated by No Child Left Behind—most studies of preschool will tend to underestimate lasting effects.

When interpreting the research, it is important to understand that most studies of the effects of preschool programs are not designed to capture the systemic effects of preschool education. For example, bad behavior in the classroom is of concern not only because it impairs that child’s ability to learn, but also because disruption reduces the learning of all the other children in a class. If preschool leads some children to better behavior in kindergarten, it benefits everyone, including the control or comparison group children who did not attend preschool. Similarly, if preschool

attenders enter kindergarten much better prepared to meet its learning goals, then teachers can spend more time and effort on other children who are less well-prepared.

So what happens when we conduct a large scale randomized trial or other rigorous evaluation comparing children who attend preschool to others in the same schools who do not? When children in the study enter kindergarten, the schools have a lighter overall load because of the benefits from preschool and they offer more compensatory services (on average) to the children who did not attend, helping them to catch up over time. It is possible for all of the children in the affected schools to have higher achievement, whether or not they went to preschool, and this will not be captured at all by the evaluation. It would be a mistake to interpret this as preschool's effects having faded out, when in fact all children converged to a higher level.

Evidence of compensatory behavior by schools is in fact common, even in studies that show persistent cognitive advantages after school entry. It is usual, particularly in studies where initial impacts were large, to find lower rates of grade repetition and special education for children who go to preschool. This is a significant source of cost-savings from preschool, but it is also likely that these additional services received by those who did not go to preschool are successful at helping the comparison children in the study catch up, mimicking "fade out." When initial effects of preschool are relatively modest, or focus on quickly learned skills like letter and number knowledge, compensatory efforts within the classroom may be sufficient to rapidly catch up those who did not go to preschool (of course, this does not mean kindergarten teachers could produce the same results if no children had gone to public preschool).

This type of compensatory behavior in schools is, of course, at best a partial explanation for differences in outcomes across studies and the disappointing results of some public programs. As indicated earlier, program features do matter. While the Head Start national impact study likely underestimates Head Start's impacts, it still appears that effects are smaller than anyone would want. The Camilli, et al. (2010) meta-analysis and other evidence clearly predict such a result. Head Start has been given a huge mission and asked to do too much with too little. Teacher qualifications and pay were too low and there was too little focus on intentional teaching. That is why it is particularly instructive that Head Start reforms over the last decade demonstrate that changing such policies can improve outcomes for children.

Head Start's Family and Child Experience Surveys (FACES) measured children's learning during a year of Head Start in the 2003, 2006, and 2009 school years. The national impact evaluation was conducted on children entering Head Start in the 2002 school year. FACES 2003 provides the closest FACES measure of how much children gained in Head Start at the time of the national impact study. Subsequent FACES surveys allow us to see how children's learning gains changed after the impact study. NIEER analyses of these data reveal that Head Start children made greater gains in language and literacy in 2006 and 2009 than in 2003. Language and literacy gains are larger for all three major ethnic groups in 2009 compared to 2003, sometimes two or more times as large. Policy changes in Head Start are likely to be behind these results. Additional data from FACES indicate that both the frequency of intentional literacy activities and the percentage of teachers with a 4-year college degree had increased by 2009 (Hulsey, et al., 2011).

The *Strong Start for America's Children Act* is designed to support precisely these features of effective programs. Prominent among them are: attention to the needs and development of the whole child, highly qualified teachers who are adequately compensated, reasonable class sizes and ratios, a sufficient amount of preschool provided, and a continuous improvement system. I focus on these features not because they are the only features of importance, but because they are the most salient in policy debates and have significant implications for cost. (For example, I do not deal with parent engagement because everyone agrees that preschool programs should engage with parents to support learning and development.) These features matter because they greatly facilitate the types of teacher-child interactions and other child experiences that most powerfully influence learning and development.

To be perfectly clear, like the 10 benchmarks for quality standards which NIEER uses to compare State preschool standards, the standards set by the Act are minimums that set floors below which programs should not fall, not recommendations that optimize chances of success. For example, a maximum class size of 15 is likely to lead to larger gains for children than 20 students per class, especially in classes with high concentrations of children in poverty, Dual Language Learners, or children with special needs. Many States and localities may be expected to improve upon the requirements of the Act as funding permits.

While academic abilities that directly contribute to achievement are important, executive functions, social and emotional development, habits, dispositions, and orientations toward learning, such as curiosity are equally important (Barnett, 2008, 2011; Diamond, et al., 2007; Hirsh-Pasek, et al., 2008). So is the child's physical development. Clearly this is about more than simply raising test scores. The primary reason to attend to a child's nutritional needs is so that he or she does not go hungry and develops healthy eating habits from an early age, not to raise test scores. Better social skills make for better neighbors and a more productive workforce. Stronger executive functioning skills keep kids out of trouble and adults out of jail. Early learning standards that address all of these domains have been developed and adopted by virtually every State, which is a great accomplishment. However, not all State preschool programs adequately reflect their standards.

Initial teacher qualifications provide a foundation for high quality teaching. In some State preschool programs, teachers are not even required to have completed a 2-year degree to lead a classroom. Based on an analysis of the knowledge and skills preschool teachers must have to be highly effective, and a review of the research on teacher effectiveness, a National Resource Council Report concluded that every lead teacher in every preschool classroom should have at least a BA degree and specialized training in early childhood education (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000). They and others have concluded that this is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a highly effective preschool education system. For example, it does no good, and might do harm, to require all teachers to have a BA degree without adequate funding to pay teacher salaries consistent with that level of education. And, no program feature should be expected to succeed on its own. Not even the best teacher, when given too many children and no instructional support from a coach or other educational leader—can be expected to succeed. Unsurprisingly, meta-analyses find only very small average effects of a BA degree over other levels of education (which includes teachers working toward the BA, it should be noted). However, this does not negate the evidence that large effects have been produced *only* when this ingredient was in place.

The logic of supporting small classes and reasonable ratios is obvious. Smaller classes and more adults per child permit more one-to-one and small group interactions. Not only are small classes and high ratios of teacher-to-children common features of effective programs, but there is also consistent evidence from education research generally that smaller class size is associated with greater effectiveness (Swanzenbach, 2014). This includes a large randomized trial that finds smaller class size produced substantive gains for kindergarten children (Nye, et al., 2000). Most recently, a randomized trial of smaller class size in Chicago Public School preschools found that smaller class sizes led to greater learning gains even though it did not change quality as measured by commonly used observational measures (Francis, 2014).

The amount of preschool education provided matters, once the quality of that education has been established. Although half-day programs have produced strong results, a randomized trial has found that an extended day and extended year produced greater learning gains (Robin, Frede, & Barnett, 2006). Preliminary results from a more recent randomized trial with Chicago Public Schools also indicate that a full-day program produced larger gains than a half-day. Other studies have found mixed results. It is possible to use the added time poorly; and, when quality is low generally more of the same is unlikely to be of much benefit. Another consideration is that when only half-day programs are offered, some children may not participate at all, because such programs conflict with their parents' work schedules. Finally, another aspect of duration is the number of years of preschool. None of the programs for which we have evidence of large effects and solid benefit-cost analyses were just 1 year of preschool at age 4.

Teacher qualifications, class size, ratio, duration, and other structural features of programs are best thought of as resources that make quality possible, but do not by themselves guarantee results. For this reason, it is critical that preschool programs have continuous improvement systems (CIS) that constantly evaluate practices and outcomes; feed this information back to teachers and those who support them (supervisors and coaches); and guide practice, professional development, and planning. Much like a GPS, a CIS tells everyone from the classroom level on up where they are, where the children are, and how to get everyone where they should be from there. Ensuring that goals for learning and teaching are met requires a CIS infrastructure that articulates these goals, monitors progress toward the goals, provides supervision and coaching, and engages teachers and those who support them in a continuous improvement process (Frede, 1998; Mashburn, et al, 2008; Pianta, et al., 2009).

The approach to quality and effectiveness outlined above and supported by *Strong Start* actually works when applied to public programs. As the result of a State Supreme Court order in the *Abbott v. Burke* school finance case, New Jersey has implemented a version of this approach in a public program serving more than 40,000 3- and 4-year-olds annually. There are clearly articulated standards for learning and teaching and evidenced-based curricula. Each classroom of no more than 15 children is staffed by certified teacher and an assistant, both receiving strong support and supervision, and paid at public school scale. High standards and a continuous improvement system transformed a patchwork of private and public programs into a highly effective mixed-delivery system that includes Head Start. Teachers in existing programs were supported to return to school to obtain the appropriate qualifications and then coached to success. Annual quality observations document this transformation. In 1999–2000, less than 15 percent of pre-K classrooms were rated good to excellent and nearly 1 in 4 was less than minimal quality. By 2007–8 the vast majority of classrooms were rated good to excellent. These are much the same programs (2/3 private) children had been attending previously, with the lower standards and funding that typifies much of American preschool education.

The consequences for children of this support for quality has been seen in a series of studies that found strong initial gains in children's learning and development, with persistent gains now documented through grade five (Barnett, Jung, Youn, & Frede, 2013). Substantive gains are found in language arts and literacy, math, and science on the State's standardized tests at fourth and fifth grade. *Abbott* pre-K also reduced grade repetition from 19 percent to 12 percent and special education from 17 percent to 12 percent through 5th grade.

Unfortunately, as I documented at the beginning of my testimony few children in the United States receive the kind of preschool programs that would be supported by the *Strong Start Act* and that is available in New Jersey's *Abbott* program. Moreover, the trend over the past decade has not been good. Although States have made some progress in raising standards, and there are exceptions among the States, in general, funding per child is inadequate to support high standards and total funding is limited to reach even children in the bottom half of the income distribution, much less all children. The Great Recession was particularly damaging to State programs and demonstrated that States have difficulty maintaining quality standards during economic downturns, precisely when the opposite should be occurring (Barnett & Carolan, 2013). Clearly our Nation's children would benefit from financial incentives and support that would help States expand access to high quality preschool. As I have shown (Barnett, 2013), over time the long-term cost-savings to States from providing quality preschool to all children under 200 percent of poverty will offset the costs making it easier for States to sustain high quality preschool a decade down the line. Federal support will make it much more likely that they make the investments in the short-term needed to produce those long-term cost-savings.

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The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Barnett.

Why do we not recess now so then we can come back? We will have Dr. Whitehurst, and then we will open up for questions and discussion. We will recess for about 10 minutes or so; 10–12 minutes. OK.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right. The committee will resume its sitting. And now we turn to Dr. Whitehurst for your testimony. Dr. Whitehurst, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF GROVER J. (RUSS) WHITEHURST, Ph.D., DIRECTOR, BROWN CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. WHITEHURST. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify, Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander.

I bring to my testimony 30 years of experience in my first career, which was as a developmental psychologist developing programs for preschool centers. And in that role, I spent a lot of time in childcare facilities that were under the sway of Federal legislation.

I saw good programs. I saw bad programs. I saw parents well-served. I saw parents terribly served. I saw programs I would like to have my kids in and others that made me cry at the end of the day on the way home. So I care about this area and I am very pleased that the Senate is focused on it.

In testimony before the House Education and Workforce Committee in February, and in a number of reports that I have released at Brookings over the past year, I have addressed specifics of the research literature on pre-K programs. The gist of my conclusions is that the research is much more mixed in quality and equivocal in implications for public policy than advocates for universal pre-K would lead you to believe.

My approach to examining the research has been to focus on the studies that are central to the debate. But even a nonselective reading of the research raises questions about the degree to which transformative outcomes are predictably achieved by pre-K programs.

Examination results from 84 studies of pre-K programs over the last 50 years finds highly variable results ranging from moderately negative to hugely positive with the average effect of recent programs being small, even before the predictable fadeout of effects once children enter school.

I believe the appropriate conclusion from existing research is that some pre-K programs work for some children under some circumstances. But which programs, for whom, under what circumstances? I do not know and I do not think anyone else does on the basis of strong research.

Most critical design decisions that face early childhood policymakers have no evidence associated with them. Examples include questions such as the value of investing in parenting programs as an adjunct to center-based care, whether an investment in a multiyear program has a higher payoff than an investment in a program just for 4-year-olds, and how to best hold providers accountable for delivering a quality service.

Further complicating the question of what the Federal Government should require of States, and States should require program providers is the role to give to parents in deciding what they want for their young children.

Wherever the dividing line should lie between the authority of parents versus the State in determining the content of a child's education. I hope you will agree with me that the line shifts toward parents in the period in a child's life prior to the beginning of formal education.

Based on the few things we know, an appreciation of how much we do not know, and deference to parents in deciding what kind of out-of-home care they want for their young children, I identify five desirable elements of Federal pre-K policy.

First, target expenditures on families with financial need. Second, devolve administration to States with as few strings attached as possible. Third, allow parents the maximum amount of choice of

childcare provider consistent with the laws and regulations of the State in which they live. Fourth, invest in data systems and research that will inform State actions and make it easier for parents to shop. And finally, conceptualize and evaluate pre-K expenditures as family supports rather than construing them exclusively as about school readiness.

Many of these elements are incorporated in this committee's bipartisan effort that led to the Senate's passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. This legislation provides for parental choice in early childhood services, allows States to administer block grant funds with substantial flexibility, targets expenditures on low-income families, and requires States to fulfill fundamental responsibilities with respect to the quality and continuity of services.

Federal support for childcare for poor families, if designed along the lines of the CCDBG template would enable parents to work, live productive lives, and raise their children in keeping with their values. It would allow States to innovate and parents to take advantage of information on the childcare services available to them.

This time of high interest in the expansion of Government support of early childhood programs is an ideal one for the Federal Government to rethink its investments. Do not provide 45 different programs with many strings attached; provide one with maximum flexibility. Proceed with a humble appreciation of how much we do not know and the intent to learn as we go.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Whitehurst follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GROVER J. (RUSS) WHITEHURST, PH.D.

SUMMARY

In testimony before the House Education and Workforce Committee in February and in a number of reports I have released at Brookings over the past year I've addressed specifics of the research literature on pre-K programs. I've reported that research is much more mixed in quality and equivocal in findings than advocates of universal pre-K would lead you to believe. The oft trumpeted claim that we should expect \$7 in taxpayer savings for every \$1 invested in pre-K is a fanciful extrapolation to today's circumstances of a flawed study of a program that served a little more than 50 children 50 years ago in a small town in Michigan.

Even a non-selective reading of the research literature raises questions about the degree to which transformative outcomes are regularly achieved by pre-K programs. An examination of results from 84 studies of pre-K programs over the last 50 years finds highly variable results, ranging from moderately negative to hugely positive, with the average effect from recent studies being small. A reasonable conclusion is that some pre-K programs work for some children in some circumstances. But, what programs for whom under what circumstances? We don't know. Most critical design decisions that face early childhood policymakers have no evidence or even much in the way of practical experience associated with them. Examples include questions such as the value of investing in parenting, whether multi-year programs are more effective, and what type of curriculum is best for which children.

Further complicating the matter is the role to give to parents in deciding what they want for their young children. Wherever people think the dividing line should lie between the authority of parents vs. the authority of the State in determining the content of a child's education, nearly everyone agrees that the line shifts toward parents in the period in a child's life prior to the beginning of formal education.

Based on what we know and a humble appreciation on how much we don't know, desirable elements of Federal pre-K policy include: (a) targeting expenditures on families with financial need, (b) devolving administration to the States, (c) allowing parents the maximum amount of choice consistent with the laws and regulations of the State in which they live, and (d) investing in data systems and research that will inform State actions and parental choice.

Much of what I see as desirable elements of Federal policy on early childcare and services has been incorporated in this committee's bipartisan effort that led to the Senate's passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (S. 1086). This legislation provides for parental choice in early childhood services, allows States to administer block grant funds with substantial flexibility, targets expenditures on low-income families, and requires States to fulfill fundamental responsibilities with respect to the quality and continuity of services.

Federal support for childcare for poor families, if designed along the lines of the template in the CCDBG reauthorization, would enable parents to work, live productive lives, and raise their children in keeping with their values. It would allow States to innovate and parents to take advantage of information on the child care services available to them. This time of high interest in the expansion of government support of early childhood programs is an ideal one for the Federal Government to rethink its investments. Don't provide 45 different programs with many strings attached. Provide one.

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and members of the committee, my name is Russ Whitehurst. I am director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, where I am a senior fellow and hold the Herman and George R. Brown Chair in Education Studies. Thank you for inviting me to offer testimony.

I bring to my testimony 30 years of experience in my first career as a developmental psychologist conducting research on programs to enhance the language and cognitive development of young children. In that role I spent a lot of time in childcare facilities that were under the sway of Federal legislation, including Head Start, Even Start, and subsidized daycare centers. My testimony is also informed by my career since that time, first as the founding director of the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education, and subsequently as an education policy expert at Brookings.

In testimony before the House Education and Workforce Committee in February and in a number of reports I have released at Brookings over the past year I've addressed specifics of the research literature on pre-K programs, doing my best to objectively characterize the quality of studies that have received public attention and trying to make sense of what the findings mean for public policy. I'm not going to repeat myself on those issues today, unless something comes up in questioning. I'll simply say that the research is much more mixed in quality and equivocal in findings than advocates of universal pre-K would lead you to believe. The oft trumpeted claim that we should expect \$7 in taxpayer savings for every \$1 invested in pre-K is a fanciful extrapolation to today's circumstances of a flawed study of a program that served a little more than 50 children 50 years ago in a small town in Michigan. It is as if someone did a study in the 1960s showing that a new Federal post office built in a small town somewhere increased business activity in that town, and on that basis argue that building new post offices across the Nation today will spur the economy.

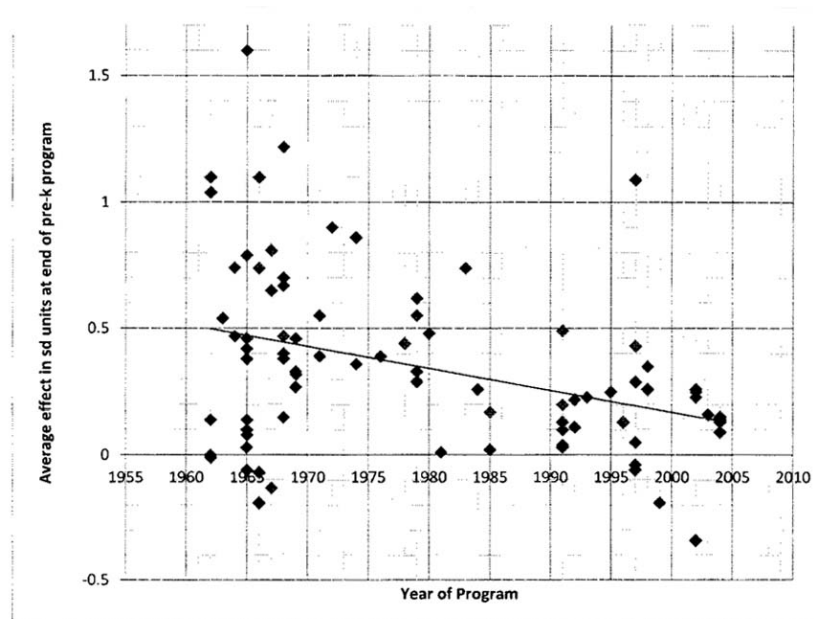
Today I will focus not on specific research studies but on how preschool services ought to be supported by the Federal Government. The takeaway from my testimony is that we know very little from research, or even from practical experience, that can inform the dozens of important decisions that should be on the table for government officials responsible for the design and implementation of early childhood programs and services. In that light, as well as in deference to parental prerogatives, Federal policymakers should design systems that afford variety in the nature of the preschool programs that are offered to parents and that can adapt with experience.

The Federal Government presently spends over \$22 billion a year on programs to support early learning and childcare through 45 different programs and 5 tax provisions. To this the Obama administrative has proposed adding another \$15 billion a year in Federal spending and State matching funds in order to create universal free pre-K for 4-year-olds. Parents spend heavily as well for unsubsidized out-of-home care for their young children.

Most of the present and newly proposed taxpayer expenditure is based on the assumption that children will learn transformative skills from early center-based care that will eliminate gaps in school readiness between more and less advantaged children, enable all children to get more out of every additional investment in their education, and generate socio-emotional dispositions that pay dividends in later life, for example, by reducing criminality or enhancing performance in the workplace.

But even a non-selective reading of the pre-K research literature research raises questions about the degree to which such transformative outcomes are regularly

achieved. The following figure is based on data provided in the appendix to a 2013 article by Duncan and Magnuson (Investing in Preschool Programs, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27, 2, 109–32). The authors review 84 studies on the impact of early childhood programs published between 1960 and 2007, including all the studies they could find that had a measure of children’s cognition or achievement collected close to the end of the program treatment period, and, at the least, had a comparison group demographically similar to the treatment group.



Each data point in the scatter plot represents the mean achievement test outcome at the end of the program period for a single pre-K program. The program year is plotted on the horizontal axis, with new programs toward the right. The vertical axis represents the size of the measured effect, i.e., the difference between the program group outcomes and the control group outcomes, calculated as an effect size. An effect size of zero means that there is no difference between the treatment and control group. Negative numbers favor the control group whereas positive numbers favor the pre-K treatment group. A rule-of-thumb for judging effect sizes is that an effect size of 0.20 to 0.30 might be considered “small”, around 0.50 “medium”, and 0.80 to infinity “large”. The solid line represents the best linear fit to the data points.

Keeping in mind that the program effects represented in the figure do not include followup data from elementary school, where all longitudinal research indicates fade-out, and that the studies are overwhelmingly of programs serving disadvantaged children, for whom impacts are largest, two conclusions seem undeniable: The first is that the effects produced by pre-K programs as found in the 84 studies represented in the figure are highly variable, ranging from moderately negative to hugely positive. This means that any single preschool program is not a sure bet to produce positive effects even at the end of the pre-K year. The second conclusion is that older programs produced much larger effects than more recent programs—the trend line begins at 0.50, a medium effect, and ends at 0.14, a small effect.

The diminishing effect size across years is probably best understood as resulting from changes in the home environments of children from low-income families. For example, the percentage of children from families in the bottom quintile of income who have mothers who finish high school roughly doubled in the timeframe covered in the figure while the percentage with postsecondary education quintupled. To the extent that preschool programs are intended, in part, to compensate for deficiencies in parent-child interactions in the home that are associated with parental education, improvements in parental education mean that the control group of children in a present day study of a preschool intervention is likely to perform much better than

untreated children from 40 years ago. Thus the difference in outcomes between the two groups in the present day study, the effect size, is smaller.

Is it reasonable to conclude from the data in the figure as well as the more detailed examination that I have given to high profile studies with more rigorous methods that the return on investment from any particular early childhood program is likely to be high, e.g., 7 to 1? I believe it would be unreasonable to draw such a conclusion—again the effects are all over the place, with many at zero or below. Is it reasonable to conclude from this and other research that some early childhood programs can produce worthwhile benefits for some participants? I believe it is quite reasonable to draw that conclusion—many of the effects are positive.

To sum up, we know that some pre-K programs work for some children in some circumstances. But, what programs for whom under what circumstances? That's where the empirical sledding gets rough.

Consider the following program design decisions that are available to policy-makers with regard to early childhood programs:

- targeted vs. universal;
- multiyear vs. single year;
- significant parent component or not;
- year-round or school-year calendar;
- full- or part-day;
- wrap around or school-like hours;
- teacher certification or not;
- provider licensure requirement or not;
- teacher college degree or not;
- school districts as providers or any sponsor meeting requirements;
- parental choice or zip code assignment;
- market-based or regulatory accountability;
- assessment of children to monitor program quality and provide consumer information or not;
- align pre-K curriculum with Common Core, or focus on social/emotional development, or let a thousand flowers bloom;
- sliding scale fee structure or strict income eligibility for a free service;
- financial incentives and career ladders to highly effective early childhood teachers or not;
- family day care included or only center-based programs;
- spending levels per student per program type;
- single State system with coordinated Federal and State funding streams or separate systems serving different populations with different needs;
- early childhood programs as a seamless part of the education system or serving broader and different goals and needs;
- enable non-traditional early childhood teachers, including Teach for America-type recent college graduates and educated retirees, or focus on upgrading the traditional early childhood workforce;
- financial support and training to qualifying parents to care for their children at home or focus on out-of-home care;
- provide digital materials intended to strengthen the role of parents as their children's first teachers or not;
- identify and disseminate evidence-based curriculum materials and professional development activities or leave this responsibility to others; and
- expand State k–12 student-level database to include children receiving early childhood services or not.

Only a couple of these design choices (targeted vs. universal and requirements for teacher credentials) are informed by decent research evidence. For all the rest, there is almost no relevant evidence, much less anything from credible research. Further, the list of important public policy design questions could be much longer, and most items in the present list subsume a set of subordinate questions for which there is also little or no evidence. For example, the decision to provide accountability through regulatory oversight of the performance of individual early childhood centers generates dozens of unanswered questions about how to do so.

In short, we know very little about nearly all of the decisions that policymakers with a relative clean slate of early childhood options ought to have on the table—and for many States it is a nearly clean slate.

Further complicating the matter is the role to give to parents in deciding what they want for their young children. Wherever people think the dividing line should lie between the authority of parents vs. the authority of the State in determining the content of a child's education, nearly everyone agrees that the line shifts toward parents in the period in a child's life prior to the beginning of formal education.

Some parents will be as intent on homeschooling their preschoolers as they are their school-aged children. Some will want center-based care for their young children that has an explicit moral or religious grounding whereas others will take exception to that. Some will want a curriculum that has a pre-academic emphasis, e.g., building math skills, whereas others will want a play-focused program, and still others will want a program that develops social relationships. Some will want a part-day program whereas others will want or need full-day. Some will prefer a family setting for out-of-home care whereas others will want their child in a classroom at a center. Some will want or need out-of-home care for their toddler whereas others will not want their child to be in a center until he or she is at least 4 years of age. Some will want their children to experience a diverse set of classmates whereas others will want their children to be with children with similar backgrounds.

DESIRABLE ELEMENTS OF FEDERAL PRE-K POLICY

1. Target families with financial need

There is no compelling reason that flows from the long-term well-being of children for the Federal Government to expend resources on universal pre-K programs. Existing research demonstrates that higher income parents receive a disproportionate financial benefit from universal programs because they shift their preschoolers from care they would have paid for themselves to care that is paid for by the taxpayer. At the same time, children of higher income, educated parents benefit far less from pre-school, if they benefit at all, than children from disadvantaged programs. If the goal of Federal or State programs is to create access, increase participation, and decrease gaps in school readiness, covering the childcare expenses of families that can afford to cover their own costs is counter-productive. Federal expenditures should be targeted on families that cannot otherwise afford childcare.

2. Devolve administration to the States

States have critical roles to play in administering Federal funds for early childhood services in: (a) establishing licensing and oversight processes that rid the childcare market of service providers that do harm or commit fraud, (b) collecting information on the quality and effectiveness of center-based childcare providers and assuring that parents avail themselves of it, and (c) designing a system of early childhood services that reflects the preferences of the citizens of the State. The Federal Government currently operates 45 programs that support early child care and related services to children from birth through age 5, as well as five tax provisions that subsidize private expenditures in this area. Each program has its own requirements and each represents a challenge to individual States that are trying to design and implement programs. It would be far better, in my view, for the Federal Government to provide funding to States to support early child care on a formula basis, requiring that States use the money to assure access for lower income families and to carry out the three critical roles described above.

3. Allow parents the maximum amount of choice consistent with the laws and regulations of the State in which they live

Whatever the reasons for the prevalent practice of assigning school-aged children to the public school closest to their place of residence, our lack of knowledge of what works best for whom under what circumstances in preschool as well as the deference we should afford parents in how they want to rear and educate their young children argue for giving States the maximum leeway to support parent choice in early childcare. Some States will fully embrace choice by providing families a means-tested voucher to be used as they see fit to obtain early childhood services from any provider the State licenses. Others will want a system that is more constrained for parents, e.g., by funneling funds through school districts. That is the nature of our Federal system. The variety in the types of services that will emerge between and within States if the Federal Government allows States maximum flexibility in their use of Federal funds for early childcare is desirable both in terms of our knowledge of what works as well as our ability to learn as we go.

4. Invest in the data systems and research that will inform State actions and parental choice

Anyone who tries to map the landscape of early childhood services in the United States quickly understands how little reliable data exist on who is served, by whom, with what forms of funding. Other than a couple of Federal longitudinal studies and questions that the Census Bureau asks as part of the Current Population Survey, even simple descriptive information is absent or questionable. This affects both policymakers and parents. The Federal Government should require States receiving Federal funds for early childcare and related services to extend their statewide lon-

itudinal data bases to include preschoolers. Without being able to follow children as they move through the system, everyone interested in improving quality and access is flying blind, including parents who need to make informed choices with respect to their own children.

The Federal Government should expand its investment in the science of early childhood education. And when knowledge is produced from that investment that should find its way into practice, the Federal Government should provide incentives for uptake by the States. As an example, federally sponsored research has demonstrated that teacher credentials bear scant if any relationship to teacher effectiveness, and that the teacher to which a child is assigned is far more important than the aggregate quality of the school the child attends. In light of this knowledge, the Federal Government could provide competitive grants for States to measure on-the-job performance by teachers and caregivers in early childhood settings, and to use that information to establish policies that encourage good teachers to stay in the classroom.

A WAY FORWARD

Much of what I see as desirable elements of Federal policy on early childcare and services has been incorporated in this committee's bipartisan effort that led to the Senate's passage by a vote of 96–2 of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (S.1086). This legislation provides for parental choice in early childhood services, allows States to administer block grant funds with substantial flexibility, targets expenditures on low-income families, and requires States to fulfill fundamental responsibilities with respect to the quality and continuity of services.

Federal support for childcare for poor families, if designed along the lines of the template in the CCDBG reauthorization, would enable parents to work, live productive lives, and raise their children in keeping with their values. It would allow States to innovate and parents to take advantage of information on the child care services available to them. This time of high interest in the expansion of government support of early childhood programs is an ideal one for the Federal Government to rethink its investments. Don't provide 45 different programs with many strings attached. Provide one. Design it so that it places key responsibilities with States and parents and has a structure that generates continuous feedback and opportunities for improvement. We need systems and services that help children learn and that, likewise, can adapt to experience. We don't know what works best, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't act.

Early childhood is a period of life for which evolutionary processes have endowed the human species with an absolute need for extended social dependency and opportunities to learn from caretakers, and that brain science indicates is our most active period of neurological development. The very factors that make early childhood a critical period for children also make it a challenging one for parents, particular for those who do not have the financial means to purchase help when they need out-of-home care for their children. I strongly support taxpayer expenditure on these young children and their families. But a shared commitment to public investment in lower income families with young children doesn't mean we know which programs that are intended to help will do so at all, much less in the most productive way. We should not be hobbled by consensus views that arise largely in an evidence-free zone grounded on little more than high hopes. We need to acknowledge how much we don't know and proceed in a humble spirit of discovery. If we are prepared to learn and adapt as we go, the prospects are exciting.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Whitehurst. Thank you all for being here. We will begin a series of 5-minute questions.

First I will start with just Mr. Pepper. I do not know if you are familiar with this. I always like to bring this up every time we start talking about early childhood.

Here is something called "The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Childhood Development and Education." It was put out by the Committee for Economic Development. It came out in 1991, and it was a group of business leaders in America who had been pulled together in the 1980s to make recommendations for what we needed to do in education. Not early, just education.

They met for several years. It was under the leadership of James Renier, the chairman and CEO of Honeywell. And if you look at all the lists, it is all—I did not see if Procter & Gamble is on here,

but a lot of the big CEO's, like you, from around the country—about what we need to do in education.

I remember being delivered this book in 1991 in my capacity then as the chair of the appropriations subcommittee. And so, here is all these big business leaders meeting for a number of years to see what we needed to do in education in America for economic growth and development. Guess what they said? Put it in early education. 1991. I have been waving this book for 23 years now.

Then in 2010, 20 years later, I was invited down to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, just downtown here, for their rollout of their prescription for what we needed to do at education, “Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education;” 20 years apart. The business community gets it.

Here we have been told by the business community all along, you have got to put more in early childhood education. And somehow, I made sort of the comment a couple of times, it seems to me that here we have been given all this information over all this period of time, and maybe it is not the kids who are not learning much in America. Maybe it is the adults who are not learning very much in America in terms of what we need to do.

I thank you, Mr. Pepper, for your advocacy, your leadership in this area, and the Chamber of Commerce, and others, who have been supporting this.

But why do you think, I would just ask you why is it, after all of this period of time, we just cannot seem to invest the money we need to in early childhood education?

Mr. PEPPER. Let me address that. I have had many young people who have come into this much later than I did, ask that very question. Why has it taken so long? Why is it?

And, of course, I am reminded that my first involvement came with Governor Voinovich when he was Governor of Ohio, and I was on his education committee back in the mid-1980s, and he had no stronger mandate, I do not think. He certainly was conscious of the budget as well. You know him. But he wanted Head Start. He wanted higher enrollment of the kids in Ohio in Head Start than any other State and he had it at a point in time, and he was really proud of it.

But why has it taken so long? I think there are several reasons. One is the voice of the people most affected is sometimes hard to hear. These kids do not have that strong voice and many of the parents who are most involved do not have that strong a voice, and they are probably not the biggest lobbying group.

Second, there has been the factor that many of the benefits have been said to take a long time to come, and it is out in the future, and there are all these other issues we need to deal with.

One thing that has really changed in my mind in the last 10 years is the degree to which we have been able to connect what happens in that 5 years to what happens ever after. And not just because of cognitive skills, but because of what are now called social-emotional. Now, they are even calling it, it sounds like a business, executive skills.

And when I ask my two daughters-in-law recently, what was the most important element of preschool, which they started at age 2, 3, and 4 and why should they have that and not mothers in Over-

the-Rhine in Cincinnati? They actually did not start with learning letters. They started with the behavior and being able to share.

I think one thing that has happened today that is positive is we have the connectivity and we have Return on Investment. And if I headed this panel, five other business people who are involved in this, you would have probably more Republicans than Democrats. And they would be talking to you about ROI's, and they would say, "Even if you do not buy this because of the social and moral issue, you buy it because of the economics." And you have driven businessmen on this today, and they believe it, and I believe it. So that is a change.

I am much more hopeful than I have been before. We will do this because if we do not do it soon, it will become so ugly in this country, as we see our failure. We still have a 20 percent dropout rate.

I was before the Chamber of Commerce in Cincinnati in 1987 saying how terrible it was, we had a 25 percent dropout rate. That was before China was at play, Eastern and Central Europe was not nearly as competitive, and we still have a 20 percent dropout rate.

Seventy percent of people who are incarcerated are dropouts. If you are not reading by the end of the third grade, and you are poor, you are 11 times more likely to dropout. That is not an anecdotal number; that is a fact. And if you dropout of high school, you are dead in terms, you are not really, you can recover from that, but you are in real trouble. And we know what happens—0 to 5 has everything to do with whether you are reading on grade.

We cannot keep resisting these facts. How we get to this full coverage, I do not know but the amount of money, whatever it is right now is doing about a quarter of the job of a job we need to do 90 percent, and we have got to fix that.

We are working on it in Cincinnati. We are not going to wait for the Federal Government, but we cannot do it all anymore than Providence can.

I just hope and pray we will do that bipartisan thing. Get a bill the Republicans can rally behind. If it is not exactly this, what is it, and let us make it happen. Please.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Thank you, Mr. Pepper. I have more questions, but I will have to do it on the second round.

Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Whitehurst, based on your count and the General Accountability Office's study, if we pass Senator Harkin's proposal, it would be the 46th early childhood Federal program involved in early childhood education. Is that correct?

Mr. WHITEHURST. That is correct. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. Based upon your research, those 45 existing programs spend about \$22 billion this year. Is that correct?

Mr. WHITEHURST. In 2011, yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. In 2011, \$22 billion. I believe I am correct that there are about 4 million 4-year-olds in America. Do you know? Is that about right?

Mr. WHITEHURST. I think that is about right. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. And that would be about \$5,000 for every 4-year-old in America. Is my math about right?

Mr. WHITEHURST. I am not really good at mental math when I am before a Senate committee.

Senator ALEXANDER. About \$5,000 for every 4-year-old in America and \$22 billion, I know, is about equal to the total amount of money that the Federal Government spends through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for K through 12. I mean, it is a lot of money; \$5,000 for every 4-year-old in America or \$7,000 or \$8,000 for every—or half that to \$2,500 or so, for every 3- or 4-year-old in America.

So here is my question, Dr. Whitehurst, if that is the case, would it be a wise first step to say let us take this \$22 billion and at least give some States the opportunity to say, “I would like to have my share of it.” In Ohio, that would be \$800 million; in Tennessee it would be \$450 million. And then give parents, let the States fashion programs that would meet the needs of children zero through five, and use that \$22 billion as a way to start dealing with the goal that we all share. Since the State superintendent of Louisiana testified before this committee that the single biggest obstacle to his achieving the goal we all share is the confusion and fragmentation of the 45 existing Federal programs that spend \$22 billion.

Mr. WHITEHURST. Yes. I mean, I strongly agree with the position that is implicit in your question. I do not know what the appropriate level of Federal appropriation is. It probably needs to be more than \$22 billion at some point.

But I do think the appropriate place to start is with the money that is being spent, and see if that cannot be spent in ways that permits more innovation, that lets States deal better with what now is fragmentation that is largely a product of the Federal system rather than something that the States themselves are responsible for.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes.

Mr. WHITEHURST. So I would fix what we are doing already before moving ahead with something else. I am very worried here about one-size-fits-all solutions. I think we have got 50 States, they have different citizens with different sense of what they need, and it would be great to proceed in that direction.

Senator ALEXANDER. My time is short. But just to be clear, the number of programs that I mentioned, 45, comes from your count of the General Accountability Office study; is that correct?

Mr. WHITEHURST. It is the GAO conclusion—

Senator ALEXANDER. It is the GAO conclusion.

Mr. WHITEHURST. Not mine.

Senator ALEXANDER. The \$22 billion is whose conclusion?

Mr. WHITEHURST. Actually, Steve Barnett has a lot to do with that conclusion. I have drawn that from his publication.

Senator ALEXANDER. Let me ask Mr. Pepper. Mr. Pepper, I know your passion for this. I can see it today. We have talked about it before in my office and on the telephone, and you are one of the most celebrated chief executives in the country.

Now, if you are at Procter & Gamble, one of the best managed companies in the country, and you had your product about which you were the most passionate, and your vice president came in and said, “Mr. Pepper, we have got 45 divisions already making

Pringles,” or whatever the product was. “I propose we have a 46th proposal, and we are spending \$22 billion already.”

Would not your first instinct be to say, “Let us consolidate all of that and let us make sure that is effective?”

And would we not be better off taking all the Federal dollars that we spend and give Ohio its \$800 million and let you and Cincinnati use that in the most effective way with your State dollars, and your local dollars, and your private dollars to meet the needs of children? We could give you enough money so you would have \$5,000 for every 4-year-old in Ohio if we did that.

Mr. PEPPER. Let me respond first. Obviously, if I was confronted with 45 different streams that were going, I would want to see if they could be improved.

Second, your math that you’re throwing out here which, of course, I do not know all of it, take it at face value, \$22 billion, is \$2,500 per 3- and 4-year-old. We have strong evidence that three and four together is almost two times better than four, is \$2,500. The cost is about \$8,000 or \$9,000. So it would leave me in Ohio about one-third of where I needed to be, i.e., about where I am now, that is in trouble.

So the math that you have gone through here, Senator, as I calculate it on 3- and 4-year-olds gets me to a point where I am worried about; i.e., \$2,500 which does not cover preschool.

Senator ALEXANDER. So you want \$100 billion new Federal dollars.

Mr. PEPPER. No.

Senator ALEXANDER. That is all my time.

Mr. PEPPER. I do not.

Senator ALEXANDER. Twenty-two dollars—

Mr. PEPPER. I do not think an investment beyond what is being talked about here, leveraged with the States is anything beyond what I would do, but you know more about this than I do, respectfully, you do. But I certainly would not go right to \$100 billion. I do not think that is what it will take.

I think, at least as I read this legislation, come with the States, it would allow us to provide preschool to all 4-year-olds and I think that is a very good starting point, quality preschool.

I think at least from the numbers I have seen, and you know them and Senator Harkin does, that that amount of money that is in this bill would allow us to get quality preschool to all 4-year-olds.

Senator ALEXANDER. My time is up and so I will stop; Senator Harkin respected his. But the amount of money we are already spending would allow you to spend \$5,000 on every 4-year-old in Ohio.

Mr. PEPPER. But again, sir, that is only about half, about 70 percent of what it costs. So it does not do the job. More money is needed. But saying that, if there is a way to get more out of every dollar we are spending now, I would go after that feverishly.

I just heard in the back of the room during the break that a great deal of the problem come because there are so many Head Start regulations. Somebody said 140 and that kind of thing from business and probably to you, boggles my mind and I would want

to get in and see how can I simplify it dramatically. Someone said, I think it was 1,400. Go to 140, I would say go to 14.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR FRANKEN

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you, Senator Harkin, for your leadership on this, your Strong Start for America's Children Act would serve an additional 1,456 children in Minnesota.

This is for anyone. What percentage of kids who are eligible for Head Start are served currently?

Mr. TAVARES. Senator Franken, in Rhode Island, it is about one-third, I believe, of the kids who are eligible for Head Start are served by Head Start.

Senator FRANKEN. And when we had the sequester, we lost funding for that, and we had to actually close the slots; right?

Mr. TAVARES. We did lose funding. I do not have the exact number of slots, but I do know that that was one of the casualties.

Senator FRANKEN. I think there is a case here to be made for additional funding, part of which is to make sure that our workforce—when Dr. Whitehurst talks about the effectiveness of these Head Start programs, and I heard your range was from mildly negative to *very* successful. I would like to do the *very* successful. I think what the difference is, is in workforce. And so, I want to train the workforce.

Dr. Barnett, can you discuss the ways in which improved teacher qualifications are connected to improving student learning in the early stages of brain development?

Mr. BARNETT. I would be delighted to and also would like an opportunity to address that \$22 billion number, since it is mine at some point.

Senator FRANKEN. Go right ahead.

Mr. BARNETT. Teaching young children, a classroom of young children, is complicated. And the bang for the buck, whether we get those wildly successful results that you want, that really comes down largely to teacher-child interaction. One-on-one in small groups, and to some extent, enabling children to have better interactions with each other, and with things in their environment; but those are just kind of variations on the first theme.

We have teachers today in Head Start, teachers are so poorly paid, a quarter to one-third of them score clinically depressed. We know that is not a good condition for an adult to be in to interact with kids. We do not want to replicate this elsewhere, and we want to solve this problem in Head Start. But teachers do need specialized—they need to be well prepared. The quality, the extensiveness, the unfamiliarity of the language that children experience in the classroom is one of the biggest determinants of how much it boosts their vocabulary, which is then going to predict their reading comprehension in high school.

So if you put teachers in the classroom who have low vocabularies, who have negative interactions with kids, you are going to replicate that in kids. That is not going to give us the positive results and is, so often, why we fail.

This is not a mystery why some programs do not work. We know why they do not work. We keep doing things, beginning with not

investing in initial qualifications and then not investing in the kind of ongoing professional development and coaching that people need to improve that would give us better results.

Senator FRANKEN. That is why I want to tout my own Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Improvement Act as part of the solution here.

Mayor Tavares, in your testimony, you touch on your efforts to empower parents and caretakers to improve their children's development. Can you elaborate on the methods that you are using to encourage parents to become more involved? And I really do believe that parents are the first teachers, and I have seen this.

We have the Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis, which is modeled after Geoffrey Canada's achievement zone. And I have seen a baby academy there and, my goodness, it was very moving to see these parents learning how to be parents.

Mr. TAVARES. Thank you, Senator.

Let me just say with respect to Providence Talks, first of all, it is a totally voluntary program. So parents have to choose to get involved and we have it as a voluntary program. We have a home visitation component and we have not reinvented the wheel. We actually are working with Early Head Start and other home visitation programs. And so, we are just a component of that in order to be more efficient.

What I have found is that parents, and we have had, actually, some press coverage on this is they have focused on parents who are willing to speak to the press about it. They are very engaged, and once they realize the impact that they can have by simply talking to your child and being engaged, engaging your child in all of the positive activities, they are very, very engaged.

And we have seen data that has shown that when we began, there was one family, and this was public; she consented to making this public. But they were speaking maybe 11,000 words and by subsequent visits, they were up to almost 30,000 in a day. And she was ecstatic with that.

One of the things that we are seeing as well is that one of the best things that we can have is word of mouth. So there are other parents who are interested in coming forward and they all want what is best for our kids. So that is something that is important.

If I could add one thing, Senator, we talk a lot about workforce preparation, but I would say to you that this is not just about the workforce. It is about the future leaders of tomorrow, and that is what we are really talking about here is making sure that we are in a position to develop our young children into the best leaders that they can be.

Senator FRANKEN. Mr. Chairman, I am out of my time. I have to leave. May I just end with a, if you will indulge me, with just a couple of thoughts?

The return on investment has been demonstrated. Sir, you were talking about that.

I am sorry I was not here. I was in an energy committee meeting. I know, Dr. Barnett, you talked about fadeout and how that is kind of a myth, and I remember the Perry study. And I remember they found the I.Q. went up, and then there was a fadeout sup-

posedly after third grade, but then they discovered all these other things.

Dr. Whitehurst referred to the fadeout as if it were a real thing, as if there was not a carryover past the third grade in terms of graduating from high school, in terms of health outcomes, in terms of not being left back, in terms of adolescent girls not getting pregnant, in terms of incarceration.

Yes, the return on investment is great. And yes, I think we need more flexibility for States. But we need to do this, not just because the return on invest is great, and we need to do it because of that. But we need to do that because you are only 3 years old once. You are only 4 years old once. These are our children. These are beautiful children and that is why we need to do it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator. We will start a second round here.

We have 45 Federal programs. This is the chart that came out of the House Education Workforce Committee. It makes it look like it is just a spaghetti factory, and we have all those things here. And then we put \$22 billion into elementary and secondary education, and we put in the same for early childhood because of these 45 programs.

I looked at this. Here is one program that says, "Workforce Investment Act dislocated worker formula grant." What has that got to do with early childhood? Well, because some of the funding in this program can be used to train childcare workers. That does not go to direct services that support the early education of young children.

So let us get it straight. All of these programs here are bits and pieces of things that can be used. Actually, there are only 12 Federal programs that are distinctly for early education and care, 12. The rest address very specific things such as Native Hawaiian Education. There is also the school breakfast program; which supports nutrition.

Forget about the 45 programs. That is just not so. That is just bits and pieces of things that a little bit of money goes out for specific purposes, like I said, to train childcare workers. Is that really early education? Not at all. So the whole "45 programs" thing is kind of nonsensical.

Also, we hear about the \$22 billion. I would point out that the \$22 billion Federal money that goes to elementary and secondary education is 8 percent of what we spend on elementary and secondary education; 8 percent from the Federal Government.

However, the \$22 billion that goes to everything in those 45 programs, and not just early education, that is over 50 percent of the funding for all early childhood education programs; the Federal Government contributes over 50 percent to the total amount we spend as a nation.

You look at these dollars spent on programs like the early intervention for children with disabilities, tax credits for families, food programs, the milk program for children, school breakfast program. These funds are not all just going to preschool. There are a lot of different programs in there.

Thirty-three of the 45 programs from the GAO report do not provide direct early learning service, they just have early learning as

an allowable use of funds. The GAO does not know how many children are served and what the extent of those services are. The other 12 that I talked about have different purposes and they are not reaching all eligible children.

For instance, you talked about, Dr. Whitehurst, the Child Care and Development Block Grant. How many people know that goes from 0 to 13?

Mr. WHITEHURST. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. You do. Well, you throw it out there like Child Care and Development Block Grant is just for little tots. But, 50 percent of the money goes post-5 years of age; 50 percent. That is not early childhood. Some of it does go to early childhood, but 50 percent of the money goes post-5 year. You know that.

If you start looking at this, you will see there is an unmet need. And then Head Start, that serves 3- and 4-year-olds, most of them are families below 100 percent of poverty. Is that our limit? Is that what we want to limit it to? Just people that are really, really desperately poor, or do we want to go up to 200 percent of poverty and include the near-poor and those that really cannot afford to have any kind of early learning programs for their kids?

Now, to the extent that we need better coordination, I am all for it. To the extent that we can consolidate programs, I am all for it. I said to Senator Alexander when I came back from Iowa from my hearing out there on early childhood I said, "My head is spinning," because what I heard was all the different funding streams that come in to support these kids that are going to school for 3 hours a day. I said, "I cannot get a handle on it."

Better coordination? Yes. And what this bill does, by the way, and I want to make this very clear, what the Strong Start bill does is voluntary; it is not a Federal mandate. It is voluntary. And what it does, it says to the States, "You do your thing." You know, "You do it." If you want a match from the Federal Government what we have said is, "OK. Here are some things that we would like." High-quality teachers for example; we want those teachers to be high-quality, really trained to know how they can deliver age-appropriate learning to these children.

Other things that we want: appropriate health services and referrals. Sure, we want that too. "Yes, do that, then we will match it. We will match the money."

But we have left in the bill flexibility, and I would be glad to look at it as we mark it up and change it. If we need to change some things, Mr. Pepper, I am willing to make changes. If we can streamline it, make things more effective, some consolidation, I have no problem with that.

But we have to keep in mind the funding streams. Yes, the States should have a lot of flexibility, but I do not think the taxpayers of this country paying their Federal taxes would want their money to go to substandard childcare programs to pay for teachers that are not qualified to teach the kids, to go to programs where they are not safe. They do not want kids to have to go to programs where people have to patch and fix childcare alongside 2 or 3 hours a day.

Dr. Whitehurst, I agree with you that when you get down to that early age, you have to lean more toward the parents. I got that.

I fully agree with that. However, it is not like it was when I was a kid. You got two parents working full-time, sometimes three jobs, and you have a lot of single parent families out there, and mostly women, and they are working hard, and they are working one-and-a-half or two jobs. They do not have the time. They do not have the wherewithal to deal with their kids like we were when we were growing up. You might bemoan that fact, but you cannot turn the clock back. It is not going to change. And so, you might want to lean that way and give as much discretion to parents as possible.

But I cannot tell you how many parents I have talked to, in my own State and elsewhere, who want what is best for their kids.

They want their kids to be safe and yes, "Mrs. Smith down the block takes care of kids, and I have known her for a long time, and I can put my child there, and I feel good about that." But they do not know if their child is really getting a good education or if they are just getting babysitting services for their kid when they send him/her down the street? They do not know.

They want safety first. They want their kids to be safe more than anything else. After that, they want education. They want their kids to be learning, but they do not know how to assess it because a lot of the parents, Angel, or Mayor, I should say, a lot of their parents are parents that did not have that kind of access themselves. Many of them did not even go to college or maybe did not even finish high school, so they cannot evaluate that very rapidly.

That is why we try to set up high quality standards. We say to the States, "OK. Flexibility is fine. You can do different things your own ways." We try to encourage as much of that in the bill as possible. I want to work with the Senator from Tennessee to see how we can consolidate some of these and make them more efficient, but keeping in mind that we just do not live in a cookie cutter society. You just do not stamp one thing and say, "Everybody has got to fit into that mold."

There has got to be a lot of different programs out there to meet different needs and that is what some of these programs do. The States that are doing this right now are trying to establish or expand programs and meet some of their own unique needs. We do not have Native Hawaiian education problems in Iowa, but they do in Hawaii, so they should be able to use their program funds to support Native Hawaiian early childhood education. So they need some flexibility to meet their own needs of those States. I have gone way over.

Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Whitehurst, the fact remains, we asked the General Accountability Office to identify all the programs that explicitly provided money for early childhood education or some money that was related to it, and they came up with 45 programs; correct?

Mr. WHITEHURST. That is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. And some of them are pretty big programs. I mean, Head Start is \$8.6 billion and the Child Care and Development Block Grant is \$5.3 billion. And in your testimony you suggested—and the legislation that I am developing, I agree with it—that we be more like the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

That we give plenty of flexibility to States to design their own programs.

A lot of the debate in Washington is between, what I would say, the mandaters and the enablers, and it is not always a partisan divide. We have Republicans who stand up in our caucus sometimes and they have a really good idea, and they want to make everybody do it. I remind them that we are supposed to respect others, that we are to try to enable people to do it.

Senator Harkin's bill requires States receiving these grants to ensure preschool programs meet requirements on staff qualifications; staff salaries; maximum class sizes and child instructor ratios; length of the school day; vision, dental, and health screenings; nutritious meals and snack options; physical activity programs; professional development for staff; health and safety standards.

Does that sound like State flexibility to you?

Mr. WHITEHURST. No, it does not. It sounds like No Child Left Behind pushed down to preschool.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes. It sounds to me like a national school board for preschool education, which is one way to do it, but that is the mandating way, not the enabling way.

I was Governor for 8 years and I used to chafe most under people who did not think I had enough sense to figure those things out for myself in our local schools, and that they were wiser than we were in the States.

I want to ask the mayor of Providence, that is the all-American Senator Whitehouse. I have been to Providence. Actually, it is a terrific city.

Let us say that the General Accounting Office and Dr. Whitehurst are approximately right about the amount of Federal dollars that we direct toward early childhood education, and that we swept through the Federal Government and said, "Let us just give it to the States with the maximum amount of flexibility, and let them devise the best way to deal with things."

If you were the Governor of Rhode Island, would you like to have a check for about \$75 million a year to use your own good judgment to decide how to make early childhood programs relate to one another? Or would you rather let us up here write very details prescriptions about how best for you to do that in Rhode Island?

Mr. TAVARES. Let me just, if I can. I hope to be the Governor of Rhode Island. So that is a very timely question.

Senator ALEXANDER. I had a suspicion of that. But I am quite serious about it because when in that position, usually you sit there, at least I did, and most of my colleagues, I had the former democratic Governor of Tennessee come up to me and talk to me about the Workforce Development Act and just say, "I threw my hands up," he said. "It was too many Washington restrictions. They assumed I did not know anything, so I could not do anything with it."

Mr. TAVARES. I would say, Senator, that obviously if you have a choice between \$75 million with no requirements and some with other requirements, you want to have flexibility.

I would also say to you that there is a danger, I think, having general outline of some things that you should expect, including

qualifications of teachers, something that we are doing in Rhode Island.

Senator ALEXANDER. So you think we should decide what the qualifications of teachers from Rhode Island should be, and what their salaries should be, and the length of the school day, and how long the physical activity program should be, and what the professional development for staff should look like?

Mr. TAVARES. I think it is very appropriate especially given the amount of money that you would be appropriating.

Senator ALEXANDER. What is left for you to do as Governor?

Mr. TAVARES. To make sure that we get the kids in the program, to make sure that we execute the program the proper way, to make sure that they are learning.

Senator ALEXANDER. So if you were Governor, you would like for Washington to design the preschool programs in Rhode Island and all you would do is just transport the children to the schools?

Mr. TAVARES. If I were Governor and you wanted to give us \$75 million, I would follow your rules because that would allow me to serve a lot of children. And I would say having looked at the pre-K situation, it is about \$6,000 or \$7,000 per child that I estimate it would cost us in Rhode Island to have universal pre-K for our children.

Senator ALEXANDER. But you do not like the Child Care and Development Block Grant model, then?

Mr. TAVARES. I would, as I said, to receive assistance from the Federal Government, obviously—

Senator ALEXANDER. I am asking you which would work best for the children? The Child Care Development Block Grant gives the State great flexibility and the parents a choice. It is vouchers and it has strong bipartisan support. It has worked very well.

Mr. TAVARES. If you want to increase that by the amount of this bill, I think that that would be fine.

Senator ALEXANDER. No, it is the form of it or not. So what I hear you saying is that you would rather we make the decisions that if I were the Governor, I would like to make.

Mr. TAVARES. I am saying to you that from my perspective, we need more assistance. I am saying that I do not think that it is an issue that the U.S. Senate or the Federal Government is giving us some guidelines, and I think that that is appropriate.

Obviously, as I said, any Governor would prefer no restrictions, but there are also dangers with that, and that is how that money is going to be spent, and that it is being spent appropriately.

Senator ALEXANDER. My time is up. I have said what I had to say.

The CHAIRMAN. I might just add that all we ask is that the teachers teaching the kids have a B.A. degree; I do not think that is onerous.

Senator ALEXANDER. How about length of school day?

The CHAIRMAN. We want a full school day, yes. We do not want to say, "2 hours, 3 hours," something like that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we specify there should be a full-day program if you want the Federal match.

Senator ALEXANDER. And the amount of the salary?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we want people to be well paid, but we do not specify exactly what that salary is. We do not specify, so it will vary by State. Some States will have to pay more, some less. It varies by State and what is necessary to make the pay comparable to other teachers.

But again, I say to my friend, we are the stewards of Federal tax dollars, not State tax dollars. If the States want to do different things with their State tax money, that is their purview. We have a responsibility to the Federal taxpayers to make sure that their Federal dollars are invested wisely and well.

And we do make decisions. We do not just leave it up to a Governor or a State and say, "Here is some money. We do not care what you do with it." Of course not. That would be shirking our responsibility. I think we are shirking our responsibility as Federal legislators.

I may not always agree with Mayor Tavares when he is the Governor on certain things. I do not know, but as Governor, he has a lot of flexibility for his State tax dollars. All we are saying here is, in this bill,

"You want a match? Here are some certain things: B.A. degree. Yes, you have to have full-day. You have to make sure your teachers are paid comparably to other teachers in the system."

We do not specify exact salaries and we leave it up to States to figure that out.

I do not think that is onerous, again, I am just saying, that is being a good steward, I think, of Federal, of the taxpayers in this country. That is just my view on it.

Senator Murray.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, and I really appreciate you holding the hearing.

I understand Senator Alexander's philosophy on not adding too much restriction, but I also know that people who pay tax dollars to the Federal Government want us to make sure it is being used well and that there are positive results from it. And I think we do have a responsibility as the Federal Government to make sure we are good stewards of the Federal tax dollar.

But having said this, I want to thank you for having this hearing. I think it is extremely important. As you know, I was a former preschool teacher. This is my passion.

I have in my office a very large quilt. Each one of the squares is made by one of the kids in my last preschool class I taught before I went to the State Senate, and it reminds me, every day of who I am serving and what is important.

So I know how important it is, but I do not think you have to be a former teacher to know how important this is. I have heard from business leaders because they know that they need a well-educated workforce, how important this issue is.

I have actually heard from a lot of military leaders, Mr. Chairman, who tell me that a quarter of young adults who want to serve their country, only a quarter of young adults are able to meet the

minimum education and health requirements today. So we are turning away a lot of young men and women in the military today because they do not have the early investment they need to be educationally successful.

I hear from sheriffs in Washington State who have told me that they know who ends up in their jails if they have not had early childhood education.

We know the importance of this across the board and I think, as I have seen in my State as I have worked on this, and here at the Federal level, that we have across-the-board support. We have Republican Governors in Alabama, and Kansas, and Michigan who have made this a priority in their States.

I am hoping that as we move forward on this, it will not be a partisan issue in the Senate either. I am very, very supportive of the Strong Start for America's Children Act. I hope that our Republican colleagues give us good input on it, and that we can really get some strong bipartisan support, and move it forward. I think it is absolutely critical that we cannot continue to do studies telling us how important early childhood education is and then just hope it happens. I think we have to make it a national priority.

Having said that, I did want to be here at the hearing today and I have been in and out, and I apologize. It has been a busy morning.

But we have heard a lot of concern from some that there are so many early learning programs out there. Here in Washington, DC, it is kind of a strange place, we know that the rhetoric inside the Beltway does not line up with what is happening in our States.

I think the need for pre-K education is really a great example of this. I hear at home all the time about the lack of affordable, high quality preschool programs. But here in DC, I often hear that there are too many Federal early learning programs. So how come I hear at home that there is not enough and here I hear there is too many?

I wanted to just ask two of you, Dr. Barnett, from a national perspective, Mayor Tavares from a local level. Is there duplication?

Mr. BARNETT. One of our jobs at the Institute is to try to figure out how many kids are served in public programs. It is a hard thing to do. Fragmentation does not make that easy.

There are really only three big buckets, though, the childcare bucket, the Head Start bucket, and the State and local pre-K bucket. A lot of those other programs are programs that prepare teachers, or that feed kids, or Department of Defense schools. You are not going to block grant those to the State.

We want to count all of those, but when we try to un-duplicate, we find very few kids, actually, and we cannot be precise, but maybe 1 to 2 percent of kids who are in Head Start and some other program. And typically, those are kids who are getting a half-day funded by one, and a half-day funded by the other, and the State or local Governments figured out how to blend that, and provide the experience they want for their kids by bringing these programs together.

Pretty much every State now has a council that has taken on themselves integrating these programs, reducing the fragmentation, and making it seamless at the local and State level.

So there is not a lot of duplication. The main problem is there is not enough money to go around. The money that we have in early childhood is for everything, birth to five; it is not nearly enough. Even at age four, where most of the money is, and the money has been declining at the State level in terms of what is invested in each child for a decade now, and the recession actually made that much worse.

States are responding, coming out of that, but to think that we have plenty of money, all we need to do is redistribute it. No. There is not nearly enough money in the system. Redistributing it is just going to mean taking it away from somebody and giving it to somebody else.

Senator MURRAY. Mayor.

Mr. TAVARES. Thank you, Senator. Let me just say this. I will repeat what I said earlier and that is one-third, one-third of our eligible Head Start children are participating in Head Start. And it is not because they do not know about it. It is because we do not have the space for them.

In Rhode Island, we do not have full-day kindergarten. I am not talking about pre-K; I am talking about kindergarten. We do not have full-day K. Providence does, some cities do, but we have a situation that we do not have the funding to make sure that we have a full-day kindergarten for our children right now based on what we are receiving and everything else that we are doing.

In terms of duplication, I am sure that someone can find something somewhere that might be duplication, but I can tell you in Rhode Island, the need is there. It is critical and it is an investment that we are trying to make, but we certainly this bill would help us immensely prepare our kids to succeed and to lead.

We certainly welcome the Senate's bill and that is why I am here today.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, before I turn it over, I just wanted to say, I think it would be easy for us to sit back here and say, "Our States or local communities think this is important, they will just do it."

But we need every child in this country to be able to fulfill their potential if our military is saying they do not have enough qualified people. If our business leaders are saying, "We need people." If we are putting too many kids in jails, we cannot just hope. We need to make sure it is a national priority.

I really appreciate you working on this bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murray.

Senator Casey.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASEY

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for this hearing, by the way. We are grateful for the time on this issue.

I would just offer a comment before, and I will start with Mr. Pepper because of his Pennsylvania roots and connections. I will be shamelessly parochial, if you do not mind.

But I want to say a couple of things about the issue and then what it means to the country. I believe that if we are doing enough for not just children, but for our future, we would make sure the children have at least four things. Maybe you could add to this, but

certainly quality early learning has to be part of that; that is the subject of today's discussion. Certainly healthcare, quality healthcare at the same time; enough to eat and hopefully as nutritious as possible; and fourth, to protect them from predators who will do them harm. And all four priorities are critically important.

I have to say when you add them all up, we are nowhere near where we ought to be. We made tremendous progress on children's health insurance in the last generation, thankfully, but even with the Children's Health Insurance Program, even with Medicaid, we still have a lot of uninsured children in very difficult circumstances. That has been a measure of progress.

On a national strategy, it should be, I think, in partnership with the States, and we should learn from the States and work with them as this legislation would do. I cannot say it any other way other than to say it has been a national failure. Other than, if you take out Head Start and what individual States have done in the last generation or more, other than that, it is a national failure, and that is why we are here today.

I was especially impressed, Mr. Pepper, by some of the remarks that you made, some of them very sobering. I think I am quoting you accurately. I wrote it down here. You are worried about the future of our Nation. You said that at the beginning of your testimony.

You also said later that passing this bill, or something comparable to it is a, "Financial no-brainer," which, I have not run a business like you have, so to have you say that is great validation of what we are trying to do.

You also said this would be transformational, and you have a sense of urgency about this issue that, frankly, Washington does not have.

Then finally, though, one of the last things you said while I was here, and I know I was back and forth, is, "Make it happen." Again, that sense of urgency.

I wanted to ask you, in particular: you talked about the skills gap and a lot of that is certainly academic. But what about the other skills, what some call "soft skills" or other skills that you hope would be inculcated in the life of a child early in their development, and that can manifest themselves later when they are in school and then eventually in the workforce?

Mr. PEPPER. Senator, what I referred to there, I think the first things that employers would look for once a person is on the job and you know what they are: ability to focus, overcome adversity, cooperate with other people, a sense of independence but also working with other people. And these things happen at very early ages.

It is hard to happen just alone in a home when, as Senator Harkin was saying, 38 percent of the children 0 to 5 in Ohio are living in a home with one parent and almost every one of those parents are working. So to be able to be in a quality preschool with a teacher, with a ratio with other kids is starting to develop those elements of sharing, coming in and coming back to the home.

At work it is attention to task, persistence, all of these things. We know what they are, these values. They are what, I believe, explains the fact that these effects have continued on in these long-

term studies that we have seen in incarceration, we have seen it in income, graduating from college.

I will not rehearse the elements of urgency I feel. I hope I conveyed them. I really do feel we have a big challenge in this country which is kind of like a cancer. You may not know it is growing.

It was not too long ago, a generation ago, we were the No. 1 country in the developed world having college graduates. We still have the most to enter college. We are now No. 12 or 18 depending on what you look at in terms of actually, at that age group, having college graduates.

The numbers, I think, it is 55 million new jobs that are going to be created by the year 2020. Sixty-five percent will require more than a high school education. This is data. We do not know if it is exactly right, but it is probably about right. Sixty-five percent will require more than a high school education, yet we still have 20 percent of children that are not graduating. What is to become of them?

I take the point that was made earlier, too, by Senator Franken. There is the element here of each child. Why should my grandchildren, why should you—because you are a child in a certain zip code in Indian Hill in Cincinnati—have a better right to life and grow up than somebody down in the other area when we have a program that works, that we are giving to about 25 percent of the children who need it? Now that is about our number. And for whom we have a lot of evidence that it will all come back to us if all you care about is the finances.

How do you look at that picture and not act quickly, resolving differences that will probably exist? But if in a business setting, if I had this kind of situation, do you know what I would do? And there would be disagreement in the top team what we ought to do. I would go offsite and I would say,

“We are going to take the next weekend or the next week, and we will come out of here with a bill or a plan that we are rallying behind and we are going to do it.”

Because I would feel if I did not do this, I was failing the company. That is how I view this.

Senator CASEY. I am out of time, but I want to make sure that someone who was born in Pottsville, PA gets the last word.

The prepared statement of Senator Casey follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASEY

Chairman Harkin, thank you for convening this hearing to talk about S. 1697, the *Strong Start for America's Children Act*. It has been a pleasure working with you on this legislation, and I am excited about this opportunity to highlight our shared commitment to promoting pre-kindergarten.

I have been a strong supporter of early learning for many years. One of the first bills I authored, the Prepare All Kids Act, became one of the bills upon which the *Strong Start Act* is modeled. Chairman Harkin and his staff worked with me, with Senator Murray and with Senator Hirono on the *Strong Start for America's Children*. It has been a privilege to join with the other champions of early learning in the Senate on this important legislation.

This legislation being discussed today, the *Strong Start Act*, represents a major step forward in our fight to ensure that all children have access to affordable and high-quality early learning experiences.

Many States, including Pennsylvania, have already made important investments in early learning, including in pre-K. Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts program is currently serving almost 12,000 3- and 4-year-olds, but that is just a fraction of the children who need access to high-quality pre-K.

An increasing body of evidence demonstrates the lasting impact of high-quality early learning. Children who participate in quality early learning programs do better on a host of measures, including both academic measures (higher academic achievement, lower rates of grade repetition, less use of special and remedial education) and social measures (decreased crime, increased socio-emotional skills).

Successful children turn into successful adults, or as I like to say, "when kids learn more now, they earn more later." Society benefits in many ways. We save money by incarcerating fewer people and having to pay for less remedial education. Employers benefit from a better-trained and more capable workforce. It all starts with high-quality early learning.

I thank Chairman Harkin for holding this important hearing, and I thank our witnesses for their testimony. I hope we will be able to mark up the *Strong Start Act* in the near future, and I look forward to continuing my support of this important legislation.

Mr. PEPPER. Thanks very much. I would also celebrate coming from Pottsville, Yuengling Beer.

Senator CASEY. Right.

Mr. PEPPER. OK? It would spray everywhere, Senator Casey, and it came into Cincinnati or Ohio recently, and I was told by Dick Yuengling, who was a childhood friend of mine, that it was the best entry he had had in any State in the Nation, and I was proud of that.

Senator CASEY. We just want you to move back to Pennsylvania.

Mr. PEPPER. I am going to come back and visit again. I was very happy to be in Harrisburg. That was my capital when I grew up. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all very much. With an attitude like that, Mr. Pepper, I have no idea what your party politics are or if you even have party politics, but with that attitude, we need you in the U.S. Senate, I can tell you that about working things out. Just get together and work it out.

I just wanted to point out again, I do not mean to go on too long, but I am just writing down here just some of the cities that I know that are moving ahead on a full-day type of preschool. They are investing in high quality teachers: San Antonio, Mayor Castro; Denver, Mayor Hancock; New York, Mayor De Blasio; Chicago, Mayor Emanuel; and Providence, Mayor Tavares.

Some cities' mayors are getting it. They are doing it, but that sort of begs the question. Should we just not do anything and let the cities do their own things? But I do not think we can wait that long. I mean, not every city can do it. They have other things that they need to do, and so some people might look at that and say, "Well, why do we need to do anything?"

I think what I have heard from most of you, anyway, is that we do need to have a national approach on this. And that is just, again, a thing I have often thought about is, why should we take tax dollars from Iowans, Federal tax dollars and put it into programs in Providence, or Cincinnati, or wherever? And that is because a child that grows up in Iowa, or Missouri, or Ohio that is ill-educated does not stay in that city or that State. They can move to Iowa or they can move anywhere, so we are one Nation.

And so, there are some things that we have to look upon as national efforts. Certainly, that is why you leave as much flexibility to the States as possible, and I thought that was what I have tried to do in this bill, setting up certain standards. Make sure it is a full-day rather than a half day or quality teachers that type of thing.

We want to give States flexibility on how to manage it, but understanding that this is a national effort that we have to do because we are one Nation. People move around. And so, that is why. And not in every instance, but in many of these instances, it behooves us to make sure that we address it in a national way, even though we say, "Well, we are taking tax dollars from Pennsylvania and it is going to some other State." Well, because it is going to the kids and those kids can live in Pennsylvania later on too or any other State.

I do not have anything else.

I yield to Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. No, I do not have anything else except I will be offering a proposal within the next couple of weeks that will be modeled along the line of what Dr. Whitehurst and I discussed. Which is to take the Federal dollars we now spend and model it along the lines of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which would give the States maximum flexibility and parents maximum flexibility.

So that the GAO's figures are right and Dr. Whitehurst's figures are right, it could be up to \$22 billion of Federal dollars now headed toward early childhood in one form or another; maybe it is somewhat less than that.

But it is a lot of money and we would be saying to the Governors and the mayors,

"Let us see what you can do with this. Take this money and combine it with yours, combine it with private money and we will be the enablers. We will not be the mandaters,"

and we will respect what the Louisiana State superintendent said, which was they have this council to try to take these big buckets and make them work together. And he said, "The greatest barrier to implanting a pre-Kindergarten program in Louisiana was the fragmentation of it."

So we will have that proposal because of the great need in our country for more effective early childhood development. And then, we will work together as we always do to see where we end up.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that is good news because we have philosophical differences, I understand that in this committee, but as Senator Alexander has always said, we probably have the most philosophically divergent committee in the entire Senate.

Senator ALEXANDER. But the most productive.

The CHAIRMAN. But the what?

Senator ALEXANDER. The most productive.

The CHAIRMAN. The most productive. We do get things done.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And that is because we work together and we hammer these things out, and I look forward to hammering this one out, and getting something done so we can mark-up a good bill and address this issue. So I appreciate Senator Alexander, has always been great to work with, and I see no reason why we cannot hammer this one out too one way or the other.

Thank you very much. You have been great witnesses. And I hope that you will be available for further questions and input as we begin to develop this legislation in the next month or so.

Thank you all very much.

The record will stay open for 10 days for Members to submit statements or other questions.

The committee will stand adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TADEO SAENZ-THOMPSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF
INSPIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTERS, SUNNYSIDE, WA AND BOARD MEMBER AND CEO
AFFILIATE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START AS-
SOCIATION

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, Senator Murray, and members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on behalf of the farmworker families and children I work with in Washington State and my colleagues with National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association, for allowing us to participate in today's hearing by submitting this statement for the record.

I am the chief executive officer (CEO) at Inspire Development Centers, an Early Care and Education agency with the mission to inspire growth, learning and success in life; one child, one family and one community at a time. We are one of the largest providers of services in the State with presence in twenty-three (23) rural communities. I am a resident of rural Washington and a proud naturalized citizen of the United States of America.

I congratulate members of the committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions for recognizing the importance early childhood education plays in the positive development of all aspects of our society and in preparing our children to lead our country into the great future I am sure you, as I do, foresee. I offer this statement both as a citizen and on behalf of the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start community and I share some of our experiences working with low-income Latino children and farmworkers. I also offer to assist or be a resource to the committee in the coming months, as you consider the Strong Start for America's Children Act (S. 1697), a bill that promises to make quality early learning available to all children.

The National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association is a membership association that includes and represents Migrant and Seasonal Head Start directors, staff, parents, and friends from across the country. Every year some 30,000 children along with their families are served by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs operating across the country. All of the families we serve have incomes that are well below the poverty line and over 90 percent of the children we serve are Latino. By advocating for resources, creating partnerships, and affecting public policy, we support our members and their work to educate and empower farmworker families.

As background, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) was launched in 1969, 4 years after Congress authorized Head Start. MSHS was created to ensure that the educational advantages made available to low-income children through Head Start were available to the children of farmworkers and the MSHS model was designed specifically to address the unique needs of farmworker families and their young children. Over the last 40-plus years, we have learned some important lessons about how to effectively reach and provide quality education and comprehensive services to farmworker families and their young children and we appreciate the opportunity to share our insights with the committee.

I would like to describe several core challenges that face farmworker families and explain how MSHS programs work to overcome those challenges in order to serve these families and their children.

THE DEMANDS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start is unique in that parents are required to work in order to qualify for services. In order for a child to be eligible for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start a family must demonstrate that over half of the family's annual income was earned in agricultural work. Most of our families have two parents working in the field and according to the U.S. Department of Labor the average farmworker family earns less than \$10,000/year and has no health benefits. Farm labor keeps adults in the field for up to 10 hours a day and often 6 days a week during the harvests and exposure to pesticides is common.

Migrant farmworker families face additional challenges as they move within a State or across State lines for work. On average, a migrant farmworker family will move two to three times a year in pursuit of agricultural work often following one of three traditional migrant streams within States and across State lines as their seasonal agricultural work demands. In most communities, local childcare resources are not available, especially for infants and toddlers, when farmworker families arrive and when resources are not available, parents have no choice but to arrange for unlicensed childcare relationships or take their children with them to the fields where they are exposed to pesticides, hazardous equipment, extreme heat, and other health dangers. The attached map shows some of the most common migrant

streams, but to be clear, families move up, down and across the country to meet the needs of America's farmers and the agriculture industry, wherever that need may be. Indeed, the past President of the National Migrant Head Start Association's Parent Affiliate travels each year between Fort Meade, FL where his family harvests oranges and other seasonal crops, to Sunnyside, WA where his family harvest apples and cherries.

To accommodate the demands of the labor market and effectively serve farmworker families, MSHS programs operate seasonally, some for 2 months and others for 6 months, as needed. During the peak agricultural season MSHS programs are open up to 7 days a week for 8 to 14 hours a day to accommodate the needs of parents working in the field or packing houses.

MSHS providers work to coordinate services within and across State lines as families migrate during the year. Our programs maintain an effective network that provides seamless services to children and their families, transfer academic and medical records and avoid disrupting a child's education.

Bernarda Alatore came to Inspire Development Centers as a migrant seasonal farmworker, a single mother of four children, three of whom were in need of special services. Ms. Alatore migrated from Oregon, where she received Head Start services, to find work for herself in Washington State. She began to work in the fields harvesting a variety of seasonal crops. She brought her children to Inspire Development Centers in Pasco, WA where she felt confident that her children's needs would continue to be served by the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program that she had come to rely on for her children's early education and personal growth needs. Her determination to make a better life for herself and her family prompted her involvement with our Family Service Workers who assisted her with setting goals and accessing local resources to help her achieve those goals. She gained confidence and began to develop her abilities and soon was very involved with the Child Development Center. She served as a member of the Policy Council and was chosen to attend the Public Policy Forum in Washington, DC. Ms. Alatore worked actively in the community as an advocate for the Pasco Center and was involved in volunteer recruitment activities. Ms. Alatore continued setting new goals for herself and her children and she recently started her own business working out of her home. Ms. Alatore has enjoyed success in this endeavor and feels she has reached a comfortable position in her personal life in which she can better support her children's goals.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As I mentioned, MSHS is unique in that parents are required to work in order to qualify for services. Most of our families have two parents working in the field and despite working long hours in very difficult conditions, our parents are very involved in the operation of the Head Start center and their children's education. They understand the importance of building a partnership with their child's educational programs and they are engaged. For example, to address the 30 million word gap, parents are taught in evening sessions how to expand how they talk with their children by taking a book home each day and doing a lap-time session each evening. Parents quickly realize their power in helping their children gain vocabulary and concepts in their home language, which is easily converted as the children learn English. We know parent engagement is an essential element of our success and the success of our Migrant and Seasonal Head Start graduates.

MSHS program directors work with parents to make sure meetings and trainings are scheduled when and where parents can participate. This requires flexible staff, willing to work evenings and weekends to meet with parents when they are not working. Staff must be bilingual and culturally competent to engage parents in a meaningful way and earn their trust. Latino families value education, see it as the way out of poverty and when they learn to expect success from their children, it happens.

I'd like to share the story of Mr. Mendoza, a Head Start parent since 2012, and currently the Secretary of the Migrant Seasonal Head Start policy council for the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) in California. Mr. Mendoza attended CAPSLO's Male/Father Engagement groups in 2012, a program that uses the Abriendo Puertas Curriculum, the Nation's first evidence-based parent leadership and advocacy curriculum for Latino parents with children under the age of 5. The following year, after he and his family migrated back to Santa Maria from Oxnard, CA, he situated his children at the Cielito MSHS center and attended the second round of Male/Father Engagement groups. Mr. Mendoza made it a goal to become more engaged as a Head Start parent after he attended these classes. He decided he wanted to serve in a leadership position on the MSHS policy council be-

cause he knew people listened to him and he could make a difference giving a voice to other parents and a role model. Mr. Mendoza's story illustrates the power of parent engagement and I am happy to report that I frequently hear stories like Mr. Mendoza's from MSHS programs across the country.

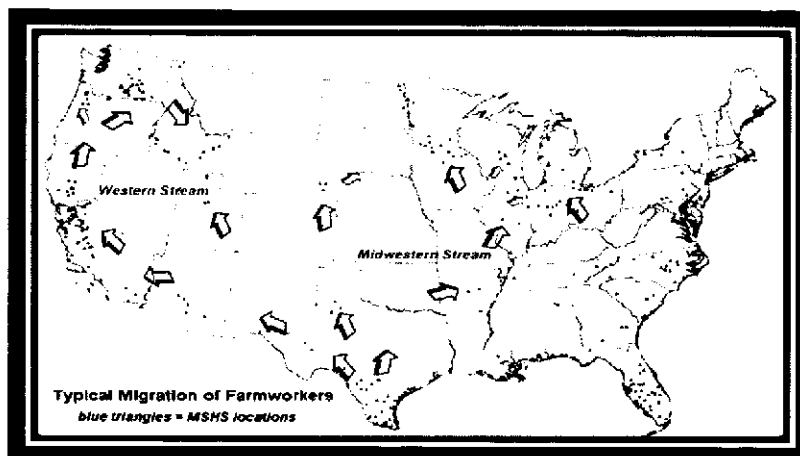
PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Like all Head Start programs, MSHS programs are interdisciplinary, which means we focus on education, health (physical, dental, and mental), social services, nutrition, and parent engagement. And like all Head Start programs we firmly believe that providing comprehensive services to children and families is essential to our success. Approximately 84 percent of the farmworker families we serve speak Spanish as a primary language at home and our programs are designed and staffed to ensure that children and families are provided with linguistically and culturally appropriate services and opportunities to learn and grow.

FIRST TO SERVE INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Since launched in 1969, well before the Early Head Start was created in 1994, MSHS programs have had the opportunity to serve eligible children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. As a result, all MSHS facilities are designed to serve babies, toddlers, and preschoolers in one building. Our programs are recognized experts in the comprehensive care and development of children from birth through school-age attendance. On average some 75 percent of the children enrolled in MSHS programs are under 4 years of age and infants and toddlers comprise more than half of the children on the MSHS waiting lists. MSHS programs receive one grant to serve eligible children and with the exception of the Early Head Start dollars provided through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, MSHS programs had not received Early Head Start funding. We were pleased to have a portion of the fiscal year 2014 Early Head Start expansion funds set aside to enable MSHS programs to expand services to infants and toddlers. This opportunity to expand services to serve more infant and toddlers is an important step and we appreciate the work Senator Harkin, Senator Murray and others did to make sure the needs of MSHS children were addressed.

I hope the stories and the experiences I have shared will be instructive as the committee considers legislation, like the Strong Start for America's Children Act, intended to make quality early childhood education available to all children and particularly our most vulnerable. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start is a tested and successful model that is instructive in understanding how a program can effectively reach and meet the needs of farmworker families. The challenges that faced farmworkers in 1969 and lead to the creation of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start—long hours, the seasonal and rural nature of the work, transportation, language, health and safety issues—are still in place today and must be addressed as Congress considers ways to strengthen existing early education programs like Head Start and or launch new initiatives in partnership with the States.



Thousands of U.S. farmworker families leave their "home base" and travel across the country following the seasonal harvests. Typically, farmworkers follow three main streams as they travel up north.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN HEAD START DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) with regard to the Strong Start for America's Children Act (Strong Start Act).

NIHSDA has been the recognized voice for American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs for over 30 years. We have always sought to advocate for the best interests of Native children and their families through actively educating Federal officials about our programs and the needs of our communities. Indian Head Start programs have been a vital part of Head Start since its inception in 1965, and we have a wealth of expertise to offer regarding early childhood education. NIHSDA welcomes the opportunity to work with the committee as it considers the Strong Start Act.

Early childhood education in Indian Country. NIHSDA thanks the sponsors of the Strong Start Act for bringing back to the forefront of the national conversation the importance of early childhood education to the future of our country. Just as Head Start has transformed the lives of millions of low-income children and their families since the 1960s, this legislation presents an opportunity to advance early childhood education for decades to come. NIHSDA believes that Native interests are in strong alignment with the goals of the Strong Start Act. NIHSDA will work closely with Congress to address how the Act can be tailored to achieve its objectives in the unique circumstances of Indian Country as well as how the Act can support Native culture and Native learning processes.

The Constitution of the United States, treaties, Federal statutes, executive orders, Supreme Court doctrine, and other agreements define the Federal Government's trust obligation to protect the interests of Indian peoples, especially in the education and health areas. The special challenges facing Indian communities require special consideration in the legislation. Many Indian reservations suffer from depression-era economics, with terrible crime and health statistics to match. The Indian reservation poverty rate is 31.2 percent, nearly three times the national average of 11.6 percent. The Indian reservation rate is comparable to the national rate at the height of the Great Depression. The Indian reservation unemployment rate is approximately 50 percent, ten times the national unemployment rate of 5.2 percent (and on some reservations the rate is 80-90 percent). Most Indian communities are remotely located and there are no other resources besides Head Start to address the special needs of young Indian children who, on a daily basis, must deal with the conditions described above. The synergistic confluence of all of these negative factors

is often overwhelming. Indian Head Start has been the best Federal program in place that actually addresses the dire situation in much of Indian Country, while doing so in a culturally appropriate and effective manner.

Fully incorporating Native children into the Strong Start Act. NIHSDA strongly believes that the most effective Federal Indian programs are the ones that work directly with tribes, such as the Head Start program, rather than through the States. State involvement or control over our programs can hinder our ability to shape the most appropriate and responsive early education programs for children in our communities. Because tribes have widely varying relationships with their States, sufficient set-asides for tribal programs are critical to ensuring that adequate funding is made available to Native communities. NIHSDA is pleased to see that the idea of set-asides for tribal programs is built into the Strong Start Act. NIHSDA remains concerned, however, about the State-centered approach and would like to work with Congress to ensure that efforts to extend early childhood education programs to all children do not come at the expense of the ability to implement *effective* programs for Native children.

Additionally, creating and sustaining effective programs requires meaningful consultation with tribes early in the process of drafting legislation that impacts Indian Country. Congress and the Administration should reach out to tribal partners to receive much-needed input on how programs should be implemented in Native communities.

In the current budget climate, NIHSDA remains concerned about the scarcity of resources. Indian Head Start programs, as well as the communities they serve, were hit hard by the effects of sequestration and budget cuts. If Head Start and the new pre-K initiatives in the Strong Start Act are not fully funded, their potential will be seriously compromised. NIHSDA also seeks clarity about how the initiative will be implemented on reservations and in Native communities, particularly with respect to the proposed Early Head Start-Child Care partnership grants. It appears that these grants may be largely contingent on partnerships with organizations and facilities that may be in short supply in many areas where American Indian and Alaska Native children live, or that may at times be incompatible with the unique needs and interests of Native children. To fully incorporate Indian children into the benefits of the Strong Start Act, the particular circumstances of American Indian and Alaska Native communities must be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

For all Americans, our children are the most precious part of our lives.

This legislation is an opportunity for America to come together and invest in our children, creating a brighter future for all. We thank you for your efforts to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education throughout the country. We encourage you to engage in meaningful consultation with tribal communities as this legislation moves forward. We hope that this is the beginning of a fruitful collaboration as we work together with you to make our shared dreams a reality for all our children.

For more information, please contact Teri Stringer at teri@threefeathersassoc.com or Greg Smith at gsmith@hobbsstrauss.com.

JACKI HAIGHT, *President*.

MAY 12, 2014.

U.S. Senator ROBERT P. CASEY,
Education Policy Office,
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
615 Hart Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC 20510.

Re: Response to Question from Senator Casey

DEAR SENATOR CASEY: Thank you for your question about whether I worry about Providence and Rhode Island children falling behind their peers because of limited access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

As a strong supporter of early childhood learning, I am deeply concerned that not every child is afforded the same access to education in the earliest years of life. I understand from personal experience how critical this early support is to future academic success.

Studies have demonstrated that participation in pre-kindergarten programs help young people develop important cognitive, behavioral and problem-solving skills. Pre-kindergarten graduates are more likely to attend college, maintain a full-time

job, and have health insurance.¹ According to the Economic Policy Institute, lifetime economic benefits realize a return-on-investment of as much as \$11 for each dollar invested.²

Unfortunately, early childhood learning programs in Rhode Island and others are severely limited in scope and only serve a small percentage of children in need. According to the 2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook, only 2 percent of 4-year-olds in Rhode Island are currently enrolled in our State-financed Pre-K program.³

That is why, as Mayor, I have made early childhood learning a top priority of my administration.

Our winning initiative, Providence Talks addresses the research that children growing up in low-income households hear up to 30 million fewer words than their middle and high-income peers by their fourth birthday. Thanks to a \$5 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Providence is empowering parents and caretakers with the tools and resources necessary to strengthen their household auditory environments.

I was proud to be able testify in strong support of S.1697, the Strong Start for America's Children Act. Thank you for co-sponsoring this important legislation and for supporting America's first Federal funding formula for high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten. This Act ensures that our youngest learners are afforded the same opportunities to succeed—not only in Rhode Island, but across our country.

Again, thank you for your leadership in promoting effective early childhood education.

Sincerely,

ANGEL TAVERAS,
Mayor, Providence, RI.

RESPONSE OF STEVEN BARNETT TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURRAY
AND SENATOR CASEY

SENATOR MURRAY

In your testimony before the Senate HELP Committee you discussed some of the positive impacts high-quality early childhood education has on student's success. As you may know, literacy is critical to a child's success in school and later in life. Support for early literacy development should start very early in a child's life, whether that's in their own home, a child care site, or an early childhood education program.

Question 1. Can you discuss the gap that currently exists in early literacy opportunities between lower income children and their peers?

Answer 1. The "literacy gap" is not simply a static difference between low-income children and others, but a continuously expanding gap between children from the most advantaged families and children from both middle- and low-income families. This gap is remarkably large for children in middle-income families and becomes twice as large for children in poverty (Barnett & Nores, 2014). Contributors to the gap include differences in home and community experiences associated with parental education and income levels and differences in the experiences children have because of what parents can purchase for their children including digital media, visits to zoos, libraries, museums, and even stores (low-income communities have less print on display and far fewer children's books readily available), and, of course, good preschool education programs. The children of high-school dropouts have only a 1 in 10 chance of attending a good preschool program; children of high school graduates have a 2 in 10 chance of good preschool. Even for the most educated parents this rises to just 3 in 10 (Barnett & Nores, 2014).

Question 2. How will the Strong Start for America's Children Act help close the opportunity gap between lower income children and their peers?

Answer 2. The Strong Start for America's Children Act provides incentives for States to increase access to quality preschool programs beginning with those in families under 200 percent of the Federal poverty line. This will reduce the opportunity gap in two ways. First, it will increase access to good preschool programs for low- and moderate-income families, and it will increase access the most for those who currently have least access. Second, although all children benefit from high quality programs, language and literacy gains are larger for children from lower income families.

¹"High quality preschool program produces long-term economic payoff," National Institutes of Health, 2/4/2011.

²"Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation: Rhode Island Summary," Lynch, Economic Policy institute, 7/9/2007.

³"Children enrolled in State Pre-K," 2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook.

My overall assessment of the data on program participation is that Hispanic immigrant families in particular have a very strong need for such programs because their young children often have extremely low levels of English language and literacy proficiency. Hispanic parents also are highly reluctant to send their children to poor or mediocre quality programs. However, they do send their children at very high rates to high quality public preschool education programs when these are available in their community.

SENATOR CASEY

Questions 1 and 2. Thank you for talking about the elements that constitute quality early learning, such as low student-teacher ratios and qualified teachers, and how they are an interconnected network that, as a whole, creates positive results for children when maintained over time. What can we do to ensure that programs are looking at quality in this holistic, and continual, way, and not just checking off boxes on a list?

How do we maintain quality in the long term? Is it a matter of ongoing teacher preparation and professional development, or further reductions in class size? Given that you've talked about quality as a combination of factors, how should a State looking to improve quality, but with limited resources, prioritize their investments to get the greatest improvement in quality?

Answers 1 and 2. Both questions focus on the key question of how to ensure quality and, thus effectiveness, and the answers are related. Programs must have a way to measure quality and outcomes for children across all domains of learning and development. Current measures are not up to the task. The inexpensive ones are too narrow or unreliable, while a comprehensive battery is too time consuming and expensive. Congress could support research and development on better measures of (1) learning and (2) teaching for young children that could be used in continuous improvement systems at a reasonable cost in time and money. It is prohibitively expensive for each State to do this independently. Two current initiatives to develop kindergarten entry assessments are useful, but not nearly enough. There should be enough invested in this effort to create a competitive market place for the best approaches. Without such an effort I fear that States will adopt poor measures because they are required to have something for accountability and evaluation. However, they will largely ignore the results because they know that the data are unreliable or, worse, they will make high stakes or costly decisions based on invalid information.

Congress could also provide for more frequent national surveys of program practices, availability and quality based on actual observation. The most recently available data are from 2005 and apply to just 4-year-olds. It would be useful to measure the quality of a sample of preschool programs nationally at least every 5 years and for children from birth to 5. Such data also ought to be more widely disseminated. For example, it is not widely known that the percentage of preschool teachers scoring good or better on measures of teaching quality was twice as high in the Northeast as in other regions of the country in 2005.

Finally, many Federal programs require that recipients of funding conduct evaluations. Typically these are one shot, point in time measures of outcomes that are not really capable of producing valid conclusions about program effects on outcomes and do not produce results that can be combined or compared. It would be more useful to require that programs have continuous improvement systems in which data are used much like a GPS—to tell people how to get to their goals from where they are and make course corrections as needed.

RESPONSE OF GROVER J. (RUSS) WHITEHURST TO QUESTION OF SENATOR CASEY

You have said that you're not advocating reducing Federal spending, but targeting it. Currently, Head Start serves children below the Federal poverty line. Most children receiving Federal child care subsidies are from families with incomes below 150 percent of poverty. The Strong Start Act would require States to focus first on 4-year-olds below 200 percent of poverty, and then they may expand to the same group of 3-year-olds. These children are not fully served by existing early learning programs; the three largest programs serve less than one-third of all eligible low-income children.

Question 1. How much more targeted do you see us getting?

Answer 1. Evidence strongly suggests that children from the most disadvantaged families are the most likely to benefit from organized pre-school settings. President Obama's proposal for Preschool for All provides a strong financial incentive for States to provide free pre-K for all children. In my view, State and Federal funds

would be more productively deployed to serve children in greatest need rather than to serve all children. My policy preference is for a sliding scale of financial support based on family income rather than a hard cutoff such as 150 percent of the poverty line.

Question 2. How would you determine which families are in the worst circumstances? How would you get them into services and what would those services be?

Answer 2. Family income, parental education, and children's disability and linguistic status could be used to qualify children for basic services (e.g., center-based care) funded by the taxpayer on a sliding scale. Additional funds would be available for intensive services (e.g., home visiting) for children with exceptional needs, based on evaluations and recommendations by social service, child care, and health care providers. Families would be in the driver's seat in determining which services to obtain for their children, but States would be required to help parents through the collection and provision of information on the quality and characteristics of individual service providers and through web-based tools to help parents shop and nudge them toward good selections.

Question 3. You have previously said that \$7,000–\$8,000 should be enough for families to purchase good care. Do you really think you can find good quality infant-toddler care for that amount? The average cost of infant care falls beneath that level in only 15 States, and exceeds \$10,000 in 19 States—and these are for current levels of quality that aren't very high.

Answer 3. You are, presumably, referring to an answer I gave to a member question during a House Education and Workforce Committee hearing in February 2014. Rep. Tierney asked whether the cost of early education of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per student would be equivalent to the cost of a voucher in a Federal voucher system. I replied that contingent upon the geographic region and the age of the child a \$7,000 to \$8,000 voucher would allow for quality childcare. I was referring specifically to the cost of center-based care for 3- and 4-year-olds. This is the age group on which Preschool for All is focused. Full-day infant and toddler care is considerably more expensive, as indicated in your question, and as recognized in my answer to Representative Tierney in which I noted that costs are contingent on the age of the child.

[Whereupon, at 12:08 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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