

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Pre-K: Front and Center

For the first time in many years, pre-k education was front and center at the 2013 State of the Union address.

President Obama made a case for ensuring that all young children have the chance to participate in an early education/pre-K program.

"In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable



families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind."

On February 13, 2013,

the White House released the President's early childhood plan that includes new investments in pre-K.

Go to page 3 for a summary of the proposed plan.

Where's the Money?

Although the President has proposed new investments/initiatives for pre-K, no plan has been submitted at this date for funding those initiatives. According to the White House, that information will be provided when the President releases his proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

According to a Defense Department memorandum on February 5, 2014, the budget will be released in mid-March. (The budget is legally required to be to Congress by February 4th; however, the White House notified Congress that it would miss the deadline.)

Neither the White House nor the Office of Management and Budget would confirm the release date.

Additionally, the sequester still looms over the budget process and the automatic spending cuts have not been eliminated. We'll keep you posted.

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Need State Specific Advocacy

Information?

Go to the SECA website and click on "Our States" at the top of the home page. When the drop down menu appears, click on "State Advocacy Contacts" and select your state. You'll get immediate access to the information you're seeking. No more searching the web!

The President Promotes Early Childhood Education



During a visit to a preschool classroom in Decatur, Georgia, on February 14th, the President made his case for promoting new investments in pre-K education.

“As I said on Tuesday night (the State

of the Union), education has to start at the earliest possible age. An that’s what you have realized here in Decatur. Study after study shows that the earlier a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But here’s the thing: We are not doing enough to give all of our kids that chance. The kids we saw today that I had a chance to spend time with in Mary’s classroom, they’re some of the lucky ones—because fewer than 3 in 10 four-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality

early childhood program....This works. We know it works. If you are looking for a good bang for your educational buck, this is it right here...That’s why, even in times of tight budgets, states like Georgia and Oklahoma have worked to make a preschool slot available for nearly every parent who is looking for one for their children. And they’re being staffed with folks like Mary—qualified, highly educated teachers. This is not babysitting. This is teaching.”

For the full text of the President’s remarks go to

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

Search for “early childhood”.

The Sequester Looms: What the Cuts Could Mean for Your State

If the sequester should occur, states are facing cuts in the 8% range in both Head Start and the Child Care & Development Block Grant.

Head Start cuts would directly affect operations of those early childhood programs: cuts to the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) could affect programs other than direct care subsidies in your state.

A portion of CCDBG funds go to direct subsidies for families; however, other funds within the block grant have funded professional development systems, quality initiatives and technical assistance systems.

Last week, the National Women’s Law Center released statistics developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the potential financial impact of those cuts. They estimated that approximately 30,000 children nationally would lose child care and 70,000 children would lose Head Start.

Following is the information about potential cuts in your state.

Alabama

CCDBG \$2,284,508

Head Start \$6,700,000

Arkansas

CCDBG \$1,500,733

Head Start \$4,000,000

Florida

CCDBG \$6,452,758

Head Start \$16,800,000

Georgia

CCDBG \$4,958,712

Head Start \$10,600,000

Kentucky

CCDBG \$2,110,606

Head Start \$6,700,000

Louisiana

CCDBG \$2,265,798

Head Start \$9,000,000

Mississippi

CCDBG \$1,777,563

Head Start \$9,600,000

North Carolina

CCDBG \$4,059,481

Head Start \$9,200,000

Oklahoma

CCDBG \$1,806,984

Head Start \$5,200,000

South Carolina

CCDBG \$2,198,713

Head Start \$5,300,000

Tennessee

CCDBG \$2,820,325

Head Start \$7,300,000

Texas

CCDBG \$12,957,784

Head Start \$29,900,000

Virginia

CCDBG \$2,316,701

Head Start \$6,200,000

West Virginia

CCDBG \$765,829

Head Start \$3,100,000

If the cuts occur, state administrators will be making decisions that will affect the field. *Source:* www.nwlc.org

Early Education for All Americans: The President's Plan

On February 13, 2013, the White House released information on the early childhood education plan that the President had mentioned in the State of the Union the night before. The preface to the plan contains this statement:

“A zip code should never predetermine the quality of any child’s educational opportunities. Yet studies show that children from low-income families are less likely to have access to high quality early education, and less likely to enter school prepared for success. By third grade, children from low-income families who are not reading at grade level are six times less likely to graduate from high school than students who are proficient. Often, the high costs of private preschool and lack of public programs also narrow options for middle class families.”

High-quality early childhood education provides the foundation for all children’s success in school and helps to reduce achievement gaps. Despite the individual and economic benefits of early education, our nation has lagged in its commitment of ensuring the provision of high quality public preschool in our children’s earliest years. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that the United States ranks 28th out of 38 countries for the share of four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education. And fewer than 3 in 10 four-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality programs.”

Preschool for All

The President’s proposal includes the following components:

- In order to improve quality and increase access, the President is proposing a **cost-sharing partnership** with all 50 states in order to extend the impact of federal funds to expand high-quality preschool and its availability to all low-and-moderate income four-year-olds from families at or below 200% of poverty. The U.S. Department of Education will allocate funds based to states in proportion to their share of children who qualify and funds will be distributed to school districts and other partners. Also included is an incentive program for states to include middle class families in the pre-K program, with states making decisions about how to serve that population including strategies such as sliding fee scales.
- In order to receive federal funding, states would be required to meet **quality benchmarks** that are linked to outcomes such as state-level standards for early learning; **qualified teachers** for all preschool classrooms and a plan to implement **comprehensive data and assessment systems**. Preschool programs across all states would meet common and consistent standards for quality across all programs including: well-trained teachers who are paid comparably to K-12 staff; small class sizes and low adult to child ratios;

a rigorous curriculum; comprehensive health and related services; and effective evaluation and review of programs.

- States are encouraged to **expand the availability of full-day kindergarten**. In order to assist states with this component, federal funds that are designated for pre-K may be utilized by the state to expand to full day kindergarten once all eligible four-year-olds have been served.
- **Investment in the Head Start program** will continue to grow, including supporting a greater share of infants, toddlers and three-year-olds in Head Start centers. It is anticipated that Head Start participation would shift to this younger demographic, while state preschool settings serve a greater share of four-year-olds.

New Initiatives

- ◆ A new **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program** to support state and communities that expand the availability of high quality infant-3 year programs.
- ◆ Expansion of the current **evidence-based home visiting initiative**.

Implementation plans are not available at this time and will be dependent upon the FY 2014 budget process and the action on the sequester. As the debate moves forward, we’ll keep you informed of the status of these proposals.

Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

Phone: 800-305-SECA

Fax: 501-227-5297

E-mail:

info@southernearlychildhood.org

Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

We're on the Web!
www.southernearlychildhood.org

How to Use This Newsletter

If you're interested in advocacy, one of the most effective tools that you can have is access to information. This newsletter is provided as a service to locate and share information that we think will be helpful to you in your work at the state level and to keep you updated on what's happening in public policy.

You'll find information that:

- **Compares your state to other SECA states**—how you're doing, what issues you have in common, what the hot topics are in your states.
- **Brings the national scene to your fingertips** and gives you a perspective on how national events might impact you...You'll also receive information about where to find additional information.

We hope you'll find it helpful. Children need you to be their "voice" in your community and state.

The Campaign to Fix the Debt

The Campaign to Fix the Debt is a "non-partisan movement to put America on a better fiscal and economic path. The Campaign mobilizes key communities—including leaders from business, government and policy and people all across America who want to see elected officials step up to solve our nation's fiscal challenges."

Several prominent Southerners serve on the Steering Committee: former Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia; Margaret Spellings of Texas, former head of the U.S. Department of Education; former Governor Phil Bredesen of Tennessee; and former Representative Jim McCrery of Louisiana.

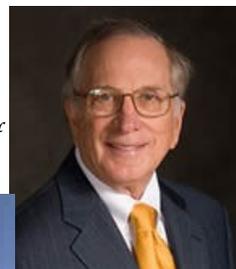
In an effort to expand their scope

and influence, the Campaign has created a **Congressional Fiscal Leadership Council** that includes many of our former U.S. Senators and Representatives.

In this group, the SECA region is represented by seven (7) former U.S. Senators and 19 former U.S. Representatives.

"The Congressional Fiscal Leadership Council is comprised of men and women who know what compromise looks like and who recognize the urgency of addressing our country's growing federal debt....This new group of affiliates will lend it experience and deep expertise to advance the mission of the Campaign to Fix the Debt." Maya MacGuineas, head of the Campaign

Sam Nunn of Georgia



Margaret Spellings of Texas



Phil Bredesen of Tennessee



Jim McCrery of Louisiana



To find a list of the members and more information about the Campaign, go to www.fixthedebt.org