



“Learning begins at birth, and the preparation for learning begins before birth. The investment we make as a nation in early learning will pay dividends for generations to come. Decades of research tell us that from infants and toddlers to preschoolers, early learning is the best investment we can make to prepare our children for a lifetime of success.”—HELP Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA)

### **HELP Chairman Tom Harkin Introduces the *Strong Start for America's Children Act***

#### **Fact Sheet**

Millions of young children from low-income families lack access to high-quality, affordable preschool programs. Decades of studies have found that quality preschool leads to a wide range of short- and long-term benefits, including better educational outcomes, stronger job earnings, and lower levels of crime and delinquency. The *Strong Start for America's Children Act* is a bold, 10-year innovative federal-state partnership to expand and improve early learning opportunities for children across the birth-to-age-five continuum. The *Strong Start for America's Children Act* provides:

#### **Access to Preschool for 4-Year Olds**

- Formula funding is provided to states, with a state match, for high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten for four-year old children from families earning below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- States in turn provide sub-grants to local entities to offer children high-quality prekindergarten, which includes:
  - Teachers with high qualifications;
  - Rigorous health and safety standards;
  - Small class sizes and low child-to-staff ratios;
  - Instruction that is based in evidence and is developmentally appropriate;
  - Evidence-based child-staff comprehensive services for children, including strong parent and family engagement, nutritious meals, and health screening and referrals.

#### **Early Learning Quality Partnerships**

- New Early Head Start and child care partnerships are supported to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers through age three.
- Local Early Head Start agencies contract with local center-based child care programs and family child care homes serving infants and toddlers to raise child care program quality through training and technical assistance.
- These partnerships will meet the high-quality performance standards of Early Head Start and blend federal funds to provide high-quality, full-day care.

### **Child Care**

- \$100 million is reserved to support child care training, licensure, and professional development and workforce incentives to expand quality.
- All children supported by the Child Care and Development Block Grant receive care for at least a year before a family has to re-determine its eligibility.

### **Home Visitation**

- The bill expresses a sense of the Senate that federal funding for voluntary, evidence-based home visitation programs be continued.

*For more information, please visit <http://www.harkin.senate.gov> or contact any of Senator Harkin's offices in Washington, D.C. or Iowa.*