



**United States House of Representatives**  
**Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education**  
**Testimony of Pyper Davis**  
**Executive Director, Educare - Washington, D.C.**  
**March 8, 2017**

Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical need for all children, especially low-income children, to have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and care. My name is Pyper Davis. I am the Executive Director of Educare Washington, D.C., a non-profit just across the Anacostia River serving children and families living in poverty with a high-quality, early childhood education program. A little bit about me, I grew up in Michigan. After earning my MBA from Harvard Business School, I worked in the private sector for 15 years. My private sector experience includes working on Wall Street at Morgan Stanley and as an executive in the television industry. In 2003, I decided to leave the private sector and harness my training and business experience to work on improving education outcomes for low-income children. This is what brings me here, today.

Educare DC opened nearly five years ago. It offers full-day, year-round, high-quality early childhood education services to children starting as young as six weeks old through age five. The Ounce of Prevention, which includes the First Five Years Fund, launched the original Educare Chicago in 2000. Today, Educare DC is part of a network of 21 high-quality, research-based, early childhood schools across the country – a network which includes two Educare programs in your home state of Oklahoma, Chairman Cole. All Educare schools braid together federal Head Start grants, federal Child Care and Development Fund dollars, along with state, local, and philanthropic funding to create true public-private partnerships. Private funders

account for about one-third of Educare DC's funding, and the other two-thirds are comprised of federal and local dollars including Head Start, child care and State Pre-K from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. As brain science, multiple longitudinal studies, and return on investment research all show, investing these dollars in children from their birth is smart policy and smart economics.

Of the 160 children at Educare DC, 15 percent have experienced homelessness in the past year and 73 percent live in a family with reported annual income of \$9,000 or less. We know these risk factors can derail a child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Without intervention, these factors often lead to a lack of school readiness and are linked to illiteracy, teen pregnancy, high dropout rates, and unemployment later in life.

Recognizing the challenges faced by children from low income families, I want to thank the Subcommittee for your bipartisan efforts to increase the federal investment in early childhood programs for children birth through age five. As Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman has demonstrated, every dollar invested in high quality birth-to-five early learning and care programs for disadvantaged children provides a 13 percent annual return on investment (ROI). This ROI includes improved social and employment outcomes, and reductions in chronic disease, health care costs, and remedial education spending.

I would like to share an example of the success I see emerge regularly from the programs that you support. At Educare, we take a two-generation approach to serving young children. In Educare DC's second year of operation, a 15 year old mother was encouraged to enroll her infant so she could finish high school. Last June, not only did Mom complete high school, but she graduated as valedictorian of her class, and is now a full-time college student. Mom told me that she was able to focus on her own education because she knew that her daughter was safe, happy

and learning at Educare.

This family's story is a real illustration of that 13 percent return on investment I mentioned earlier. But more than just numbers, these are real people and families who are transformed. We are able to provide services to these children and families because of the funding we receive, especially from the federal government. More and more, federal investments in high-quality early childhood education programs and systems are being matched by governors and legislatures from red and blue states alike. But, states and private investors cannot do it alone. There is an appropriate role for the federal government that is not intrusive but highly catalytic and collaborative. This is hard work, and only by having nationally coordinated efforts and talent helping to lead, can we continue the progress we have started.

Thank you for having worked together in a bipartisan way that increases support for early learning and care programs. I appreciate the support you have shown these programs in the past and I hope that will continue as you wrap up FY2017 and work on FY2018. Because access to high-quality early learning programs help children from low-income families enter kindergarten prepared to learn and closes achievement gaps, I am requesting that the subcommittee continue to increase support for early childhood programs in FY2018.

### **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**

CCDBG helps parents work while their children receive care, and the reauthorized law includes reforms aimed at improving quality that stimulates children's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. It took bipartisan support to reauthorize CCDBG, and it will take a bipartisan effort for federal funding to realize the reforms in the law. The cost of implementing the new law, to ensure no children lose slots, will require an increase of \$1.2 billion above the current funding level, therefore I ask that you increase the appropriation in line with this need.

## **Head Start and Early Head Start**

Head Start and Early Head Start deliver comprehensive early learning, health, nutrition, and family support services to low-income families and children from birth to age five. However, only 41 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds participate in Head Start, and only 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers participate in Early Head Start. I urge the subcommittee to build upon its legacy of being a champion for Head Start, and support robust funding, above current levels, to ensure the new, outcomes-driven Head Start Program Performance Standards are implemented with fidelity. Additionally, I request that the subcommittee support increases that would put Early Head Start on a path to reaching 10 percent of eligible children over four years, starting with an increase of \$500 million in FY 2018 for Early Head Start expansion, including through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships in order to grow high-quality early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers.

## **Preschool Development Grants**

The opportunities present within Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will improve supports for our youngest learners as they transition from early childhood education settings to the elementary school classroom. This is particularly clear in that ESSA authorizes a new Preschool Development Grants (PDG) program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The new PDGs provide an opportunity to further engage state and local level initiatives that continue to grow in quality and quantity across the country. I request that you provide sufficient funding to allow for a new PDG competition. These grants will improve collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs at the state and local level. Additionally, this would support quality improvement activities, laying the foundation for states that receive grants to increase access to high-quality early education programs in future years.

## **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA Parts B and C)**

Under the Grants for Infants and Families program, Part C of IDEA, states implement systems of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs and make Early Intervention services available to children with disabilities, aged birth through 2. Part B supports the inclusion of young children age 3 through 5 with disabilities in state and federal early learning programs such as Head Start and CCDBG. Thanks to Part B, 753,000 children with disabilities were able to access necessary services in FY2015. Regarding IDEA Parts B and C, I request that you consider providing an increase in funding for both programs to ensure that all children with disabilities, birth through 5, have access to vital early learning and development services.

### **CONCLUSION**

Access to a high-quality early childhood education helps low-income children enter kindergarten ready to learn, and offers entire families greater opportunities and a pathway out of poverty. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Pyper Davis

Executive Director, Educare DC

202-741-8656

[pdavis@educaredc.org](mailto:pdavis@educaredc.org)