

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 3, 2007

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-112
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
SD-184
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
SH-123
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As you know, the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program has endured drastic cuts in the last several years. In fact, during the last four budget cycles, the program has been cut by over 60%. In your states, as well as across the country, this has resulted in dozens of local programs being shuttered leaving thousands of children and adults without the local support to become productive, literate members of our communities. As you craft Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations legislation; we ask that you join us in supporting Even Start by restoring funding to its fiscal year 2005 funding level of \$225 million.

The Department of Education cites compelling statistics that show Even Start families are the most in need,

- 84% percent of Even Start's families are at or below Federal poverty levels,
- 84% of Even Start adults do not have a high school diploma or GED; 44% of the parents have not gone beyond the 9th grade, and
- Nearly one-third of children and parents served by Even Start are limited English proficient.

These families depend on Even Start for help in learning English, pursuing educational opportunities, and obtaining job skills. In a Texas A+M University Study (2004-05) parents participating in Even Start were more often and better employed. The study found that employment jumped from 17% before enrollment to 51% after program completion; and wages increased by more than 25%.

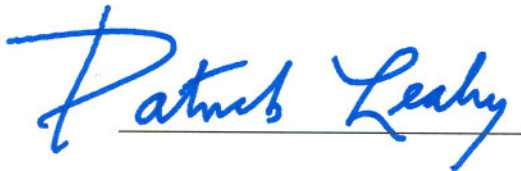
In addition, parents participating in Even Start acquire important skills to be their child's first and most important teacher. In fact, Even Start complements other early childhood education programs such as Head Start and Reading First by providing the comprehensive family services that we all know are necessary for children to arrive at school ready to learn. Further, Even Start is consistent with the parent involvement goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The program supports parents, who are among the least likely to engage in their children's education, to be effective advocates for their children. For example, the California Department of Education Even Start evaluation found that the percentage of parents who reported reading to their child on a more regular basis and involvement in activities such as parent teacher conferences increased each year that they were served by the program.

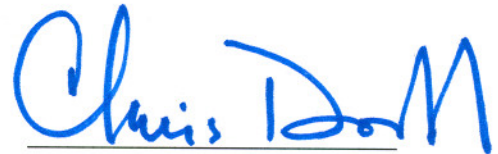
We ask that you return funding for Even Start to the FY 2005 level of \$225 Million.

Sincerely,

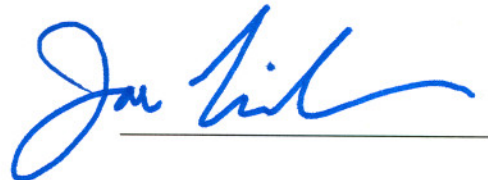

Olympia J. Snowe

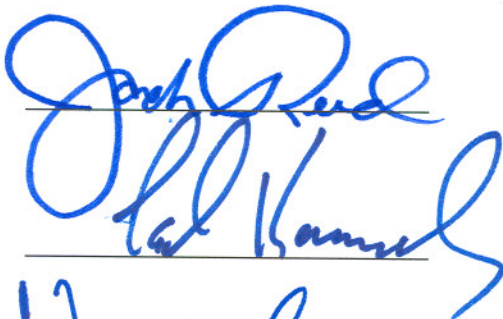

Hillary Rodham Clinton

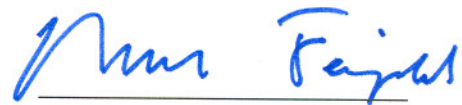






















Susan Collins

Em Bayh

Blanche L. Lincoln
