



For Immediate Release

Contact:

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Casey Proposes Major Expansion of Child Care Access and Quality

PHILADELPHIA, PA-U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) today proposed landmark legislation to reverse chronic underfunding of child care and increase the availability of high-quality child care to children in low-income and working class families. This gross underfunding over the last seven years has left only one in seven eligible children receiving federal assistance and the national average wage for child care workers is barely above the poverty line.

“The neglect in federal funding for child care during the Bush Administration is unconscionable and adequate funding must be restored,” said Senator Casey. “My Starting Early, Starting Right Act would provide a long overdue yet necessary commitment to child care access and quality. Working families across the country are struggling to find affordable child care and millions of children are missing out on the developmental benefits of high quality care.”

Senator Casey’s legislation has the endorsement of over 45 national and Pennsylvania advocacy groups.

Approximately 13.5 million federally eligible children do not receive child care assistance.

In 2006, the national average wage for a child care worker was \$9.05 per hour or \$18,820 annually. For full-time work, this is only slightly above the 2006 poverty guidelines of \$16,600 for a mother with two children.

Due to low wages and limited benefits, many child care workers do not remain in the field very long. Of those workers employed in child care in 2005, only 65 percent remained employed in child care in 2006, creating high turnover rates and instability in this workforce that is so critical to the well being of children.

Starting Early, Starting Right would drastically increase funding available for programs that offer child care to children up to 13 years of age who are in low-income families. The bill would increase federal child care funding by \$10 billion a year. This increase would triple the current funding level of \$5 billion a year.

Since FY 2002, federal funding of child care has been essentially frozen, while inflation and the economic needs of families have steadily increased. Today, only one in seven eligible children receives federal child care assistance. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of children are on waiting lists for child care assistance and may wait months or years for help. Some states no

longer keep waiting lists due to lack of funding.

The *Starting Early, Starting Right Act* will address this enormous unmet need by increasing funding for child care, with the dual goals of helping more families afford child care and improving the quality of early care. The bill will increase the quality of care by, among other things, ensuring states visit and monitor child care providers on an announced as well as an unannounced basis every year and requiring child care providers who are licensed or registered to participate in 40 hours of training before they work with children as well as 24 hours on an ongoing annual basis. The bill will also help increase compensation for qualified child care providers.

For more details on the Starting Early, Starting Right act, see the attached summary.

Since entering the Senate in 2007, Senator Casey has been a leader on children's issues. He was a leading voice during the unfortunately unsuccessful attempt last year to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program. He continues to fight the Bush Administration's CHIP directive that would severely limit the ability of states to enroll children in the CHIP program. Last year, Senator Casey introduced the Preparing All Kids Act to provide at least one-year of high-quality pre-kindergarten education to children.

Senator Casey's Starting Early, Starting Right Act has been endorsed by 28 national organizations and more than 17 Pennsylvania organizations including:

National:

American Federation of State, Local and Municipal Employees
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Law and Social Policy
Cherokee Nation
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Project
Coalition for Human Needs
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Professional Recognition
Early Care and Education Consortium
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
First Five Years Fund
First Focus
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association
Lutheran Services in America
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Crime Prevention Council
National Women's Law Center

Pre-K Now
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment
YMCA of the USA
Zero to Three

Pennsylvania:

Child Care Providers United
Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC)
Early Connections, Inc.
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania
Knowledge Learning Corporation
Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC)
Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Pennsylvania Child Care Association
Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell
Pennsylvania Home-based Child Care Providers Association
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network
Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC)
Public Citizens for Children and Youth
United Way of Pennsylvania
United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
United Way of Westmoreland County

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Starting Early, Starting Right Act

Increasing Access to and Improving Quality of Early Childhood

Development and Education

Since FY 2002, federal funding of child care has been essentially frozen, while inflation and the economic needs of families have steadily increased. Today, *only one in seven eligible children* receives federal child care assistance. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of children are on waiting lists for child care assistance and may wait months or years for help. On a daily basis, working parents face the impossible choice of keeping their jobs or leaving their

children in low quality, unstable care. Senator Casey believes America's working families and children deserve better.

The *Starting Early, Starting Right Act* will address this enormous unmet need by increasing funding for child care, with the dual goals of helping more families afford child care and improving the quality of early care.

Unmet child care needs are hurting America's children and families:

- Approximately 13.5 million federally eligible children do not receive child care assistance.
- Problems with child care can cause low-income parents to lose wages, be denied a promotion, be reprimanded for absenteeism, or even lose their jobs.
- Poor families on average pay 29 percent of their household income on child care compared to 15 percent for low-income families (100-199 percent of poverty) and 6 percent for upper-income families.
- In 2006, the national average wage for a child care worker was \$9.05 per hour or \$18,820 annually. For full-time work, this is only slightly above the 2006 poverty guidelines of \$16,600 for a mother with two children.
- Due to low wages and limited benefits, many child care workers do not remain in the field very long. Of those workers employed in child care in 2005, only 65 percent remained employed in child care in 2006, creating high turnover rates and instability in this workforce that is so critical to the well being of children.

The *Starting Early, Starting Right Act* will increase the availability of high quality child care to children in low income and working class families across the country by:

- Giving states the funding they need to offer child care assistance to hundreds of thousands of children who are currently on waiting lists.
- Meeting the needs of underserved children, such as English language learners, children with developmental disabilities and other special needs, children living in very poor communities and children in rural areas, to ensure we reach children most in need of high quality child care.
- Ensuring states will visit and monitor child care providers on an announced as well as an unannounced basis every year.
- Requiring child care providers who are licensed or registered to participate in 40 hours of training before they work with children as well as 24 hours on an ongoing annual basis.
- Expanding parents' access to high quality child care opportunities by requiring states to pay child care providers at least the 75th percentile of market rates (the rate that gives parents access to 75 percent of the providers in their communities) based on the actual and current costs of care, and encouraging states to exceed this rate for special

populations of children with greater needs.

- Improving access to high quality care for infants and toddlers by setting aside 30 percent of the bill's funding for this underserved group of children.
- Encouraging more states to adopt quality rating provisions that a number have already adopted to support child care providers seeking to improve the quality of their programs. Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) such as the successful Pennsylvania STARS program give providers benchmarks as well as resources to continually improve the quality of their care.
- Increasing funding for state quality improvement initiatives such as:
 - *Training and education* for providers linked to increased compensation;
 - *Resource and referral systems* that can help families find care that meets their needs and supports their community's child care providers;
 - *Grants to providers* to help them meet licensing requirements and improve the quality of their settings.

Why do America's children and working families need the *Starting Early, Starting Right Act*?

- Research shows that high-quality child care helps low-income children enter school ready to succeed. One study found that children who had enrolled in high-quality child care demonstrated greater mathematical ability and thinking and attention skills, and experienced fewer behavior problems than other children in second grade. Effects were particularly strong for low-income children.
- Other studies have demonstrated that low-income children who enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs score higher on reading, vocabulary, math, and cognitive tests, are less likely to be held back a grade, are less likely to be arrested as youths, and are more likely to attend college than their peers who did not enroll in such programs.
- Single mothers who receive child care assistance are 39 percent more likely to remain employed after two years than those who do not receive assistance in paying for child care. Former welfare recipients with young children are 82 percent more likely to be employed after two years if they receive child care assistance.

Child care develops America's potential. Child care helps children, families and communities prosper. Children in high quality child care programs learn and develop skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Child care is a basic that helps families get ahead by giving parents the support and peace of mind they need to be productive at work. And child care helps our nation stay competitive with a stronger work force now and in the future. When America supports high quality child care, we encourage children, families and our nation to reach their full potential.