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The following memo provides a summary of recent developments in public policy issues of interest to Early Childhood advocates.

This Week in Washington – Call for ESEA Action

Both the House and Senate returned to Washington, D.C. this week after a nearly two-week break due to the blizzard that blanketed the metro area and the Presidents' Day recess. There were some clues last week as to the upcoming agenda for Congress. Most importantly for early childhood advocates, the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House Education and Labor Committee announced their intention to move forward with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year. The Administration was particularly pleased by this announcement, as its education spending plan reflects a rewritten ESEA bill that will be hard for appropriators to consider if authorizing legislation is not written and passed in record time—six months, to be exact. So, while this announcement signals the start of a concerted effort to get the job done by the key policy makers charged with the task, no one underestimates the challenge.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan spoke to representatives of colleges of education and school administrators last week, saying that he was working with education policymakers to move changes to current law. His proposed rewrite of ESEA calls for a comprehensive review and re-visioning of federal support for public education. Announcements from Republican and Democratic lawmakers involved in these conversations supported that call. The House Education and Labor Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education issued a joint statement saying, “We’re announcing a bipartisan, open and transparent effort to rewrite No Child Left Behind – a law that we all agree is in need of major reform. It will start with a series of hearings in the coming weeks to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead as we work to ensure an excellent education is available to every student in America. With a real commitment to innovation, we invite all stakeholders who share our serious interest in building a world-class education system to email us their suggestions.”

Of importance to advocates will be the opportunity to comment on the need to enhance access to early childhood funding and activities that are allowable under Title I of ESEA. An ongoing concern has been that since early childhood activities are only an allowable use of Title I funds rather than funded under a specific set aside, birth to age 5 programs are shortchanged. The House Education and Labor Committee has invited stakeholders to send suggestions for

improving ESEA to eseacomment@mail.house.gov. The deadline for comments is March 26, 2010.

Health Care Reform

The week began with the release of the President's health care proposal, which is expected to frame the discussion at a bicameral, bipartisan health care summit set for February 25. While the proposal is based on the Senate health care overhaul package, some changes were included in the hopes of appeasing some House members prior to the meeting. "We view it as the opening bid for the health meeting," White House spokesman Daniel Pfeiffer said. Senior White House officials estimated the changes would increase the cost of the \$871 billion Senate bill to \$950 billion and insisted the new costs are fully offset in the proposal. Additionally, the proposal appears to construct an exchange marketplace where consumers can comparison-shop for insurance on a state-by-state basis, versus the national model supported in the House bill. As expected, the plan does not include a public option.

Early childhood advocates will be following the debate closely tomorrow as the success of the President's plan could mean additional funding for home visitation programs as included in the Senate's health care legislation. However, the summit is only the opening move in this game of chess that is the health care reform debate. Whether the Senate has the stomach for passing a health care bill using reconciliation procedures requiring only 51 votes for passage remains to be seen. While it has been reported that many Senate Democrats appear open to this option in the face of Republican obstruction to passing any health care reform measure, the House will also have to muster the votes needed to pass a bill, which is far from a done deal. To view the President's health care proposal, visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/health-care-meeting/proposal>.

ED and HHS Hold an Interagency Briefing on Early Childhood Issues

On February 18, 2010, Joan Lombardi, the Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Jacqueline Jones, the Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Early Learning at the Department of Education (ED), hosted a briefing to discuss current early childhood priorities and interagency initiatives. Jones opened the briefing with an examination of the President's FY 2011 Department of Education budget proposal. Specifically, she highlighted the areas in the budget proposal that would provide funding for early childhood services within the context of the Administration's broad plan for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In response to questions about the consolidation of funding for programs, such as Parent Information Resource Centers in the President's proposal, Jones attempted to quell concerns about the elimination of dedicated funding for certain programs by saying that the Administration hopes to fund activities, including parent engagement and involvement, under a variety of its proposed consolidated programs. Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, the Director of Head Start, then provided an overview of Head Start's Roadmap to Excellence, which aims to improve school readiness and promote long-term success. She noted that Head Start has identified two main, guiding themes to help reach these goals: 1) ensure every Head Start child is exposed to effective, appropriate learning experiences both in the program and at home, and 2) assure the integration of Head Start into a continuum of high-quality early care and education that spans from birth to age eight. Shannon Rudisill, the Associate Director of the Child Care Bureau, then spoke on the bureau's goal of implementing pathways to stronger policies and accountability, as well as pathways to excellence for childcare. The pathways will provide a framework for the bureau's efforts to assist states in the adoption of high-quality standards, enhanced licensing

requirements, and improved performance and rating systems. Finally, Lombardi concluded the briefing by identifying HHS and ED's work to develop and support crosscutting initiatives to improve the delivery of early childhood services for all children.

CAP Releases Report on Expanded Learning Time

Last week, the Center for American Progress hosted a briefing to discuss a recent report on the benefits of expanded learning time and the many partners that do and can support the effort. The report's findings are drawn from study of four public schools in Massachusetts and one public charter school in New Jersey. The authors, Kathleen Traphagen and Christine Johnson-Staub, note that many schools seeking to maximize student success partner with external organizations that offer a variety of resources to students and teachers. Schools partner with community-based organizations, youth development agencies, health care and human service agencies, institutions of higher education, and cultural and arts institutions to deepen academic content, offer enrichments, train teachers, and ensure access to health, social, and other services for students and families. They argue that ELT offers an opportunity for schools and external organizations to create strategic relationships that reach a new level of intensity and have a deep, substantive impact on students and teachers within the expanded school day. Managing and sustaining these partnerships, however, is a complex and challenging task, as they learned from their work in compiling the report. For more information, visit:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/02/expanded_time.html.

Study Finds that Family Income Has Greatest Impact on Early Years

A new study published in *Child Development* has found that family income plays a more critical role in some stages of children's development than others. In the study, University of California, Irvine researcher Greg Duncan and his colleagues analyzed data on a nationally representative sample of people born between 1968 and 1975, with an eye toward determining links between the level of a family's income throughout the childhood years and a host of outcomes later on in children's lives. Specifically, the study assessed the consequences of poverty between a child's prenatal year and 5th birthday for several adult achievement, health, and behavior outcomes, measured as late as age 37. Using data and controlling for economic conditions in middle childhood and adolescence, as well as demographic conditions at the time of the birth, findings indicate statistically significant and, in some cases, quantitatively large detrimental effects of early poverty on a number of adult outcomes. The researchers found that the strongest links were between living in poverty before age 5 and having lower earnings and fewer work hours 30 years later. The researchers estimate that a \$3,000 annual increase in income between a child's prenatal year and 5th birthday is associated with 19 percent higher earnings and 135 more work hours. Commenting on the study, Secretary of Education Duncan said, "Policymakers might do well to focus on situations involving deep and persistent poverty early in childhood." To read the full abstract of the study, visit <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/123275016/PDFSTART>.