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The following memo provides a summary of a recent study evaluating the effects of the economic downturn on children's access to preschools.

This Week in Washington

Last week, Members of Congress stayed home for a week-long recess to celebrate Memorial Day. Before the recess began, several important items on the legislative calendar were completed. The third time proved to be the charm for approving a bill to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act (HR 5116). Though smaller and less generous in terms of funding than originally envisioned, the bill was hailed by STEM advocates as an important accomplishment of retiring House Science and Technology Committee Chairman, Bart Gordon (D-TN). The next chapter for this bill will unfold in the Senate, where the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee has already held several hearings, but there is not a defined timetable for action on a bill.

House Members also struggled the week before the recess began, with a Jobs and Tax Extenders bill that made it to the finish line only after billions of dollars worth of unemployment benefits and funds to prevent cuts in Medicare reimbursements were left on the sidelines. The action will move to the Senate this week. On the other side of Capitol Hill, the Senate, after a week of debate, completed action on an Emergency Supplemental spending bill that covers the cost of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and natural disaster relief, but little else. The focus of activity on this bill will now shift to the House, where a mark-up of a much larger measure was postponed before the recess. Education and healthcare advocates worked hard all last week to pressure Members at home to support the plan supported by House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI), which would provide \$23 billion in Jobs for Education and \$5.7 billion to fill a Pell Grant shortfall. It is unclear if the votes are there to increase emergency funding to a level that just about doubles the amount included in the Senate passed measure.

With Capitol Hill quiet last week, the focus of education advocates was at the Department of Education as round two of Race to the Top applications were due on Tuesday, June 1. Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia submitted proposals. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan hinted that as many as 15 of these applicants would be announced as winners in September. And finally, the much-anticipated Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics were released in Atlanta at a joint event with the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers last Wednesday. Without even seeing the document, five states have announced that they will adopt these college- and career-

ready standards. It would be nice if the Congress could find such easy agreement with the work they need to complete now that they are back in the Nation's capital!

NGA and CCSSO Release Common Core Standards and May Now Turn to Standards for Birth-Five Year Olds

On Wednesday, June 3, the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released the final version of the Common Core State Standards. These standards are to provide a "consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in grades K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them." While these standards are not federally mandated and must be adopted and implemented by states individually, the Obama Administration is supportive of the effort and has linked some federal funding opportunities to a state's embrace of these standards through initiatives, such as the Race to the Top grant competition. Each state will have the summer to review and analyze these standards and will then follow its own procedures and processes for adoption. The education community is eagerly watching not only which states will adopt these standards but also how they will be implemented. In addition, both the CCSSO and the NGA have stated they will soon begin to develop a set of standards for birth to five years olds that will be aligned with the K-12 standards.

Early Education Advisor at ED Discusses the Obama Administration's Priorities for Early Childhood Education

On Thursday, June 4, Jacqueline Jones, the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Education for Early Learning, spoke at a conference in Louisiana titled, "Investing in Children," where state leaders and advocates in early education gathered to discuss recent early education policy. Jones discussed the priorities for early childhood education outlined by the Obama Administration stating that educators and policymakers must focus on birth through third grade when bolstering early childhood programs. Jones explained that while the federal government should streamline the various sources of funding (and this is part of what her role at the Department of Education (ED) is intended to do), it should not be responsible for creating innovative measures but rather these should be developed by states, schools and community groups. Jones also stated the Administration's intention to launch a \$9 billion competitive grant program to encourage states to develop more coordinated early learning systems, although this concept has yet to come to fruition. Attendees were concerned that the Race to the Top had not focused enough on early childhood. Jones explained that while ED is focused heavily on K-12, they did include early childhood education as an "invitational priority" in the Race to the Top grant process.

Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families Holds Hearing on the State of the American Child

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on Children and Families held a hearing Tuesday titled, "The State of the American Child." Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT) chaired the hearing, which also included statements and discussion by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), and Bob Casey (D-PA). Witnesses included: Harry Holzer, Ph. D, an economist at Georgetown University and Urban Institute; Jack Lund, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York; Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission on Children; and Alma Powell, the Chair of the America's Promise Alliance. In Dodd's opening remarks, he addressed the primary need to attend to the impact of the recession on children and families and his plan to introduce new legislation to establish a National Commission on Children. Senators Alexander, Sanders and Casey supported Dodd's position and added to the list of crucial issues facing children and families. This included: 1) the need to focus on parents, teachers, and principals; 2) the need to address the long-term effects of

childhood poverty; and 3) the importance of basic nutrition and healthcare reform. Witnesses additionally spoke about child safety concerns; childhood obesity; the need to strengthen community-based organizations; and the necessity of creating policy responses that focus on boosting employment for parents so that they might have the means to support their children more effectively. This hearing was the first in a series of discussions focused on the status of American children today. To read the testimony of all the witnesses go to:

<http://help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=8cd90bdf-5056-9502-5df1-0414c6667854>