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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

The Senate debate on the Financial Services Reform bill finally ended last week. After Majority Leader Harry Reid's (D-NV) effort to bring the bill to a final vote was at first stymied by absent Senators and disgruntled Democratic colleagues, and consideration of so many amendments and variations of amendments that many of them sounded like ones already considered, the bill finally passed Thursday night by a vote of 59-39. This was good news for Reid, who was anxious to turn this week to the \$60 billion emergency supplemental spending bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and domestic natural disasters. He stated that the supplemental would take priority over a \$150 billion tax extenders bill that is also on the Hill's "must pass" list. The struggle for both pieces of legislation continues to be identifying how to pay for at least a portion of the spending in light of growing sentiment on and off the Hill that increasing the federal deficit is endangering the country's overall economic recovery.

Last week, retiring House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) challenged education advocates to generate a groundswell of public support for adding the \$23 billion *Jobs for Educators* legislation to the emergency supplemental plan. He is determined to include the funding that states desperately need to avoid firing up to 300,000 teachers in the coming months as well as \$5.7 billion to cover the Pell Grant shortfall in the House supplemental bill that will come before his committee as early as tomorrow. Obey's commitment was front and center at a press conference today on the supplemental where he was joined by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Representative George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, though equally determined, was not successful in convincing his colleagues to include it in their bill during last week's Senate Appropriations Committee mark-up. Instead, he was forced to consider offering the bill as an amendment this week during the debate on the Senate floor. Given the 60-vote threshold that is required to include it and the lack of support from the President, Harkin ultimately decided against offering the amendment. While there have been countless news articles and op-eds written about the education crisis, it does not appear as if the concern has changed the minds of recalcitrant Members of Congress who want to hold the line on spending during an election year.

The COMPETE bill came up again last week and suffered the same fate it did the week before. House Science and Technology Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN) hoped he had appeased his Republican colleagues by shaving some cost off the bill and including prohibitions against paying federal workers guilty of watching pornography at work—an issue that had been fodder for last week’s failed vote. He was disappointed when Republicans said the bill still included too many new programs when the country cannot afford them. The bill once again went down, although it is expected to be brought to the floor yet again this week.

The outcome of several primaries held last week did little to convince Members that holding the line on spending is not wise in the face of re-election. After serving in the Congress for 48 years, Senator Arlen Specter (D-PA) lost his bid for another term to Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) in the Pennsylvania Democratic primary. Specter’s party switch made the race a contest, but it was still surprising to see a senior member of the Appropriations Committee lose after so many years in office. In Arkansas, Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) also had a disappointing showing in her state’s Democratic primary and will face Lt Governor Bill Halter (D) in a runoff contest. Republicans were not immune to inter-party upsets. Rand Paul of Kentucky, with backing from Tea Party Republicans, defeated the mainstream Republican candidate supported by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) in the state’s Republican primary for retiring Senator Jim Bunning’s (R-KY) seat.

So, at the end of the day, this week’s debates are similar to last week’s debates, which were similar to the week before. Members of Congress, staff and advocates are all looking forward to the Memorial Day Recess, set to begin on Friday, May 28th.

Senate HELP Committee Holds Hearing on Early Childhood Education

On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, chaired by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), held its tenth and final hearing on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The topic of this hearing was early childhood education and the lively discussion focused on what Congress can do to ensure that more young children begin their education fully prepared to learn and succeed. Noting that “A solid initial investment in our young children will save us countless billions in future spending on remedial education, criminal justice, health and welfare programs,” Harkin asserted that ESEA reauthorization offers an important opportunity to help states and school districts ensure that more young children are prepared to succeed in school. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), the only Republican Senator attending the hearing, stated that “quality early childhood education and childcare is essential to ensuring all children enter school ready to learn and succeed.” He also emphasized the need for all federal programs, such as ESEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Child Care Development Block Grant, Head Start and Early Head Start, to work together toward the same goal of helping children succeed in school, college and the workplace. Speaking for the business community, witness Barry Griswell, Board Member, Former Chairman and Retired Chief Executive Officer of Principal Financial Group, stressed that the “real answer to the future of our country is to make sure every child enters kindergarten ready to learn.” He stated his belief that the business community finally “gets it” and is “stepping up” because they have seen the research that says investing one dollar in early childhood education will reap up to 17 dollars in return. Griswell remarked that the only way the U.S. can remain competitive in the 21st century is to invest in its human capital. Other topics raised by the witnesses included the development and assessment of high quality programs and teachers and the need for children to be ready for school, and the need for schools to be ready for all children. Lastly, all the witnesses agreed with Senator Burr’s assessment that federal programs focused on early childhood education and care must work together in a more collaborative manner and help incentivize the replication of best

practices. To read the testimony of all the witnesses go to:

<http://help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=ac5e1b12-5056-9502-5d84-93f5a613d30f>.

Private Foundations Acknowledge and Support Early Learning Initiatives

On Friday, May 21, the Council on Foundations, in partnership with Grantmakers for Education, held a briefing titled, “Building Bridges: Philanthropy’s Role in Linking Early Learning and K-12 Education.” All the participants at the briefing made it clear that early learning is a critical period for children and their long term success was recognized by each Foundation through their financial commitments. Ruby Takanishi, President and CEO of the Foundation for Childhood Development, began the discussion by asserting that recent research indicating third grade as a crucial turning point for a child’s trajectory in life has led to a trend in private funding towards early learning programs through third grade. Takanishi explained that while focusing on pre-k to third grade is only the first step in effecting change, it is a movement gaining momentum across the country. Lois Salisbury, Director of the Children, Families and Communities Program at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, followed by elucidating the Packard Foundation’s priorities for developing early learning standards; developing a data file on every child entering the education system from birth; and developing a rating system for early childhood programs that are incentivized financially to improve. The final panelist, Sterling Sperim, President and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, stated that \$300 million had been committed by the Kellogg Foundation to support early learners from birth to age eight. While all three panelists stated the entire spectrum of the education system, P-16, should be recognized and supported, they emphasized that Foundations must be focused where they dedicate funding and the evident need to invest in children from birth to third grade seemed most critical at this time.

Representative Biggert Introduces Bill to Amend McKinney-Vento Act

On May 12, Representative Judy Biggert (R-IL) introduced HR 5285, the *Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act*. A similar bill was introduced last year in the Senate by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). These bills amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth program and Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Specifically, the bills propose to do the following: 1.) increase the authorized funding level for transportation costs to schools of origin and make this “best interest” school selection process an eligible use of Title I, Part A set-aside funds; 2.) clarify the intended use of these set-aside funds to provide homeless students with a full range of academic support opportunities; 3.) provide professional development, training, time, and resources to district homeless liaisons to increase their ability to identify and support homeless children; 4.) address inhibitory barriers to stability and work to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment in early childhood education; 5.) address guardianship barriers and other factors inhibiting academic progress and high school graduation rates of unaccompanied homeless youth; 6.) improve access to summer school and to before- and afterschool and other programs; 7.) improve access, stability, and rapid assistance for disaster-related homeless youths and children through the creation of a supplemental Emergency Disaster Grant. To view the text of this bill, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.5285>

NIEER Releases Report on State Spending and Pre-K Programs

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) recently released a report titled, *The State of Preschool 2009*, which analyzed the impact of the economic downturn on children’s access to preschool. The report revealed state spending for preschool rose slightly in 2009, though it did not keep up with inflation. Despite this slight rise, the \$446 million increase in state contributions to preschool programs only represented half the funding growth from the previous year. The report stated that slightly more than half of the states with preschool

programs actually decreased their spending in inflation-adjusted dollars in FY08 to FY09, while the remaining states increased their preschool funding above these levels. Additionally, enrollment in preschool programs did not increase for 3-year-olds, while 4-year-olds saw a 1 percent increase.

The results of the study revealed the potential for a larger threat to pre-k programs than previous trends suggest, according to the NIEER. Though increasing federal Title I funding can be viewed as working to increase support for pre-k, the report also showed that federal efforts have generally focused more on increasing funding for child care and Head Start, ignoring state pre-k programs. Thus, the number of states not adequately funding their pre-k programs is expected to increase. Ensuring federal dollars are used as supplemental funds to state funds for pre-k programs, is imperative. NIEER reported that of the states serving 60 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool programs, the funding levels are inadequate to provide high-quality services. The study recommends focusing federal investment on improving the quality of these state preschool programs, particularly in terms of ensuring access to qualified teachers. To read the entire report go to: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf>.