

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor  
Health and Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Thank you for your leadership and efforts to improve the health of our nation's children. As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we encourage you to continue to fund the National Early Child Care Collaboratives program at \$4 million (level funding). The funding request is consistent with FY 2017 enacted funding level and levels included in the FY 18 appropriations committee reports for both the House and Senate.

Research has shown the importance of the early years in shaping a child's overall health trajectory. During those early years, early child care and education (ECE) settings are optimal venues for the development of healthy habits, such as regular physical activity and healthy eating, for the nearly seven million children served in ECE settings from birth to age five.

We share your vision that there must be continued investment in innovative and effective prevention initiatives that help children grow up healthy. Research has shown that children exposed to healthy foods early are more likely to prefer them and to develop eating habits that promote healthy growth. A growing body of evidence indicates that physical activity can benefit academic performance and is essential for development of gross motor skills. The National Early Child Care Collaboratives, a program funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, addresses these very important issues.

The goal of this program is to work with state and local partners to engage ECE providers in making small but impactful changes to promote healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding support, and screen time reduction. Specific focal areas and action plans are developed based on local needs. Continued funding in FY 2019 will enable the spread of sustainable changes and will enhance parent and family engagement. Since inception, this program has reached more than 2,272 ECE programs serving more than 191,000 children in the following ten states (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, Kentucky, Virginia and California). Currently, the program includes learning collaboratives and state systems integration work in Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Virginia, as well as work in Ohio to bring its successful Ohio Healthy Program to Family Child Care providers. The program is also initiating readiness planning in four additional new states (Mississippi, Illinois, Wyoming, and Tennessee).

The program has been successful at supporting states in developing integrated, sustainable, state-wide ECE approaches. States that have completed participation in the program continue to prioritize healthy eating and physical activity in child care based on their unique needs and priorities by leveraging other funding sources.

To date, the program's national, state and local implementing partners have also been very successful in leveraging additional public and private funds to amplify the impact of the program. These public-private collaborations (totaling \$2.85 million to date) were only made possible because of the base funding provided by Congress. Though we understand that your Subcommittee has a difficult task ahead, we strongly urge you to allocate \$4 million for this program in FY2019. This request is a worthy investment to support an innovative, effective approach to promoting child health.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to sustain this important program.

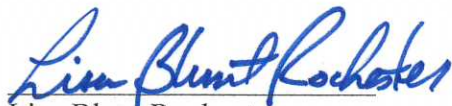
Sincerely,



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo  
Member of Congress



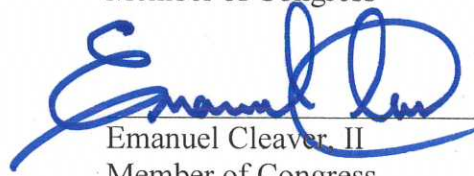
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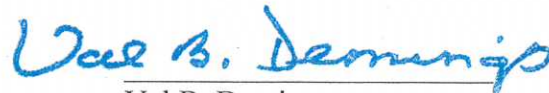
Yvette D. Clarke  
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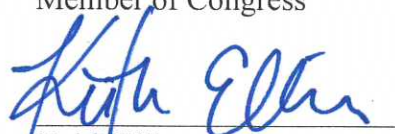
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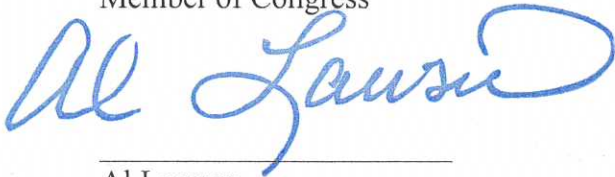
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Member of Congress



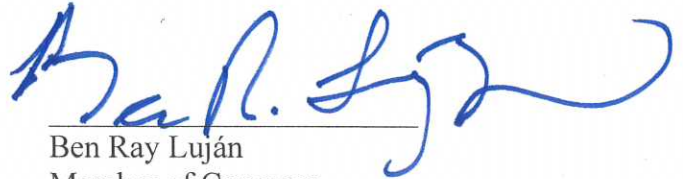
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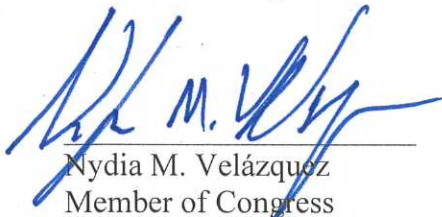
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