



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

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April 16, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS
Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS
Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS
Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Senator
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS
Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Senator Murray:

Thank you for your leadership in Congress on behalf of babies and toddlers. ZERO TO THREE is a non-profit that works to ensure that babies and toddlers benefit from the family and community connections critical to their well-being and development. As the leading voice for babies, we greatly appreciate the substantial investments in early learning in the FY 2018 omnibus. We especially want to thank you for the historic increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the increase in expansion funds so Early Head Start (EHS) can extend its proven services to more infants, toddlers, and families. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill, ZERO TO THREE urges you to continue to invest in key programs that support the early foundational development of infants and toddlers, specifically:

- Appropriate funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) at a level that at a minimum, fulfills the \$5.8 billion increase included in the bi-partisan budget agreement for FY 2018 and FY 2019. CCDBG empowers States to support parents that pursue work while, at the same, supporting high quality child care to infants, toddlers and older children. As of FY 2016, the program provided two generation support to nearly 1.4 million children and over 823,000 families.
- Appropriate \$11.3 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start, which would allow for an additional \$500 million for Early Head Start (EHS) expansion. EHS provides comprehensive early childhood development services to low-income children and their families, including educational, health, nutritional, and social services. Despite research showing that EHS services, especially when started prenatally, have positive impacts on child development and parental support, EHS still reaches only six percent of eligible children. Our request also includes investments to keep the overall Head Start program strong, with an increase of \$233.6 million to support the workforce with a cost of living adjustment, \$339.5 million for quality improvement, and \$373.9 to continue extending the duration of Head Start to meet the needs of working families.



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- Appropriate \$479,800,000 for IDEA, Part C. Part C provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, including assessment of child and family needs, service coordination, and the provision of services. Nearly 373,000 children received Part C services in 2016.
- Appropriate \$6.3 billion for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC provides nutrition-rich foods, nutrition education, and health care and social services referrals to eligible low-income women, infants, and children. 7.7 million women, infants, and children received WIC benefits each month in Fiscal Year 2016.
- Appropriate \$15 million for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health programs (IECMH). IECMH provides grants for early mental health promotion, identification, and treatment for our youngest children, as well as training, coordination and integration among providers through evidence-informed approaches. It is a groundbreaking mental health program that benefits children who are at risk for mental health disorders or who have been repeatedly exposed to trauma.

Your leadership has been a boon to the well-being and development of our country's babies and toddlers. Moreover, it has resulted in a wise investment to help ensure our future workers, thinkers, and innovators get the start they need to keep our nation strong. In that vein, we urge you to continue increasing these investments critical to our babies and toddlers and their families.

Sincerely,

Matthew Melmed
Executive Director
ZERO TO THREE