

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT: PREPARING IOWA'S CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

FIELD HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING DOING WHAT'S RIGHT, FOCUSING ON PREPARING IOWA'S
CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

MARCH 10, 2014 (Des Moines, IA)

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DOING WHAT'S RIGHT: PREPARING IOWA'S CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2014

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Des Moines, IA.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9 a.m., in the Mitchell Early Learning Center, Hon. Tom Harkin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senator Harkin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARKIN

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for coming. The meeting of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee of the Senate will come to order.

First, I want to thank our witnesses for being with us today. I also want to thank Superintendent Tom Ahart and the Des Moines Public Schools for having us here at this site, Mitchell, and also thank all of you who are involved with this Early Learning Center for allowing us to come here and hold our hearing.

I'll make an opening statement. I'll introduce the witnesses, and then they'll make their statements, and we'll get into a general discussion. At field hearings, what I always like to do, during my time as chair, is to perhaps even open it for questions or comments from audience members. Hopefully, we'll have time to do that.

I want to thank all of you who are witnesses for all that you do to improve the lives of our young children in Iowa, and I offer my deepest gratitude for that. I've had the pleasure of working with a lot of you in the past and during my years in Congress, and I know you know that I have been advocating for early childhood education for a long time.

That interest comes from my strong belief that all children are born with the potential to learn and succeed. All children, regardless of circumstances, deserve access to high-quality education that will nurture that potential. If we as a nation are to provide our children with the tools necessary to be successful in their school years and afterward, then we must all recognize, as I've been saying for 25 years, that education begins at birth, and the preparation for education begins before birth.

The Federal Government currently funds a number of programs to support early childhood education and care. However, they're well short of meeting existing needs. And need I mention that

there's a lot of different intersecting programs and it's very hard to figure out sometimes exactly who is covered by what.

But we are well short of meeting existing needs. We serve fewer than 1 in 20 infants and toddlers that are eligible for Early Head Start. We serve about one in six children eligible for child care assistance. The Omnibus Appropriations bill that we passed in January made some investments. Through the Appropriations Subcommittee that I chair, we provided over a \$1 billion increase for Head Start, \$1 billion, and a \$150 million increase for child care.

Now, that all sounds well and good. But I have to say a lot of that was just to make up for the cuts in sequestration. So we sort of got out of the hole, and now we've got to start moving ahead.

Just last month, in my first of a series of hearings on this, one of the witnesses mentioned that of parents in the top quintile of income earners, the top 20 percent of income earners, 90 percent of their kids receive access to preschool. For children who live in families in the lowest 40 percent of income earners, only 65 percent of those children had access to preschool. That disparity is simply unacceptable, I believe, in our society.

Why should the access to quality preschool, just like access to elementary school or secondary school—why should that be determined by your zip code or by the income status of your family? It shouldn't be, if we truly believe in equal opportunity for all.

Here in Iowa, the State has made great advancements in providing greater access to high-quality early childhood education. When you take into account the State's investments in the Shared Visions program, the statewide Voluntary Preschool program for 4-year-olds, and the Federal investments through IDEA, Head Start, and Child Care, Iowa is near the top in the Nation in terms of access to preschool.

However, as I'm sure we'll discuss today, there are areas where we can improve. My understanding is that the statewide program only requires an instructional program of 10 hours a week, or 2 hours a day. I'm a firm believer—and I think the research indicates—that a full day of preschool yields far better results for children, not just 2 hours. And on a more practical note, this part-day structure of 2 hours makes it tough on families who have to knit together transportation and child care arrangements to make preschool work for their kids.

Another area where we can improve is geographic equity in access. I understand that school districts in Iowa participate in the preschool program on a voluntary basis, which is shutting out some 4-year-olds in some communities all together.

Now, again, I have legislation that is pending in my committee that I am trying to get through, my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, this committee. It's called the Strong Start for America's Children Act. That bill—some of you may be familiar with it—significantly expands our investments at the Federal level to accelerate the work being done in States to support high-quality pre-K. It also dramatically increases access to high-quality care for infants and toddlers.

I'd be interested to hear any of your views on that legislation. I'm trying to get it passed out of my committee before Memorial Day. That's another reason why we're having these hearings, to give us

more input on changes and things that we need to do to mark up that bill.

I look forward to the testimony from all of you, and I want to encourage you all to have a frank conversation on how best Congress can support some of the great work that you're already doing here in the State of Iowa.

I'll just introduce our witnesses in order. We'll ask them each to make an opening statement, and then we'll get to questions and answers.

First, we welcome Senator Herman Quirnbach. Senator Quirnbach was elected in 2010 to his third term in the Iowa State Senate, representing Ames and the surrounding areas. Senator Quirnbach is the chair of the Education Committee and a member of the Human Resources, Judiciary, Local Government, Ways and Means committees, and the Education Budget Subcommittee.

Prior to serving as senator, Senator Quirnbach sat on the Ames City Council and was Ames Mayor Pro Tem in 2002. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University and his Master of Arts and Ph.D. from Princeton University. He is also an Associate Professor of Economics at Iowa State University.

Next we have Susan Guest, who has spent her entire professional career with the Des Moines Public Schools and now serves as the Early Childhood Programs administrator, overseeing all Federal and State grant-funded pre-Kindergarten programs. She has spent the past 5 years creating a comprehensive system for serving pre-Kindergarten students in Des Moines.

Prior to that, she was principal at Smouse School. She also served as Special Education consultant and teacher for the district for 14 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and special education from UNI, her master's from Drake University, and her administrative endorsement and license also from Drake University.

We have Barbara Merrill, executive director of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children and the Project Manager for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Iowa. In addition to her responsibilities at Iowa AEYC, she currently serves Early Childhood Iowa in a leadership role with her early childhood professional development work.

She has worked in the field of early care and education for over 30 years, including teaching and child care in Head Start, providing family child care, directing a child care center, and instructing at the college level. Ms. Merrill has her bachelor's degree in child development from the University of Maine and her master's degree from Drake University.

Next is Christi Regan. She is the Head Start director for the Hawkeye Area Community Action Agency, as we call it, HACAP. Ms. Regan has been in Hawkeye Head Start and Early Head Start for 14 years, working as a services supervisor, parent involvement and family literacy coordinator, and education coordinator. She is also vice president of the Iowa Head Start Association. She received her bachelor of science degree from Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids.

Then we have Gabriela Gallentine, the executive director of Hispanic Educational Resources, Inc., in Des Moines. She serves as the

director of Connigo Early Education Center, the only five-star, State-licensed, bilingual early childhood program in Des Moines. And just so everyone understands, that is the highest rating a licensed center can receive from the Iowa Department of Human Services.

For 20 years, Ms. Gallentine has worked in early childhood and elementary education, both as teacher and administrator. She was recognized by the California State Senate for her teaching skills and rewarded by California for her students' performance on California standardized tests. She graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in education from UNI and a master's degree from Chapman University in 2003. And my notes say she is the first person in her family to complete a college degree.

Next is Brigadier General Douglas Pierce, a member of the executive council of Mission: Readiness, a nonpartisan national security organization of senior retired military leaders calling for smart investments in America's children. General Pierce spent over 39 years serving in the U.S. military. He began his military career by joining the U.S. Air Force in 1968 and then joined the Iowa National Guard in 1974.

He spent over 20 years in the 132d Flight Wing as the 124th Fighter Squadron Operations Officer. He became Vice Commander of the 132d Flight Wing in 1999. In 2002, he was transferred to the headquarters of Iowa Air National Guard as Vice Commander. In 2004, he assumed his duties as Assistant Adjutant General.

After retiring from the Air Force as a Brigadier General in 2008, General Pierce decided to continue his public service as mayor of Norwalk. That's a town south of Des Moines. It's a little town that's a suburb of Cumming, as some of you may know. He continues his public service by being involved with Mission: Readiness.

So we have a distinguished panel. All of your statements will be made a part of the record in their entirety, and just in the order in which I introduced everyone, we'll start off. And, if you could, just take 5 to 10 minutes—I don't have a clock—well, I've got a watch, I guess—and sum up for us your testimony and what you think we need to know as we develop this Federal legislation.

Senator Quirmbach, welcome and please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. STATE SENATOR HERMAN C. QUIRMBACH, IOWA STATE SENATE DISTRICT 23, DES MOINES, IA

Senator QUIRMBACH. Thank you, Senator Harkin. I want to thank you and I want to thank your committee for your interest in this issue and for your good work. We're looking for good things for the bill that you're working on.

Early childhood education is, indeed, a worthwhile investment and, indeed, a critical investment for this country and for the future of our children. There has been a lot of research done over decades to show benefits flowing to the kids throughout their lives. The longitudinal studies are just amazing and show how many different areas and different ways in which the benefits show up years and years later.

I wanted to talk today about what we're doing here in Iowa, and I need to start with a little disclaimer. You mentioned I'm a faculty member at Iowa State, so I have to be clear. The factual informa-

tion I'm reporting today is not from my own research. It's derived from a variety of sources. The supporting documents were all submitted to you for the committee's record. So I'm sure that the facts are all right. They're just not my facts.

Here in Iowa, there are a number of different programs which help to serve the needs of 4-year-olds, and that's where I'm going to be concentrating my remarks today. The statewide voluntary preschool program, which was initiated in 2007, serves roughly half of the 4-year-olds in the State. We also have an older, smaller program called Shared Visions. Of course, there's the Federal Head Start program and other services. We wind up serving about 65 percent of the 4-year-olds in the State. That percentage has been growing throughout the length of the statewide voluntary program.

Let me talk about the statewide voluntary program since that's the newest and the largest. The word, voluntary, is important. It reflects the voluntary nature on both the school side and the parent or the child side. Districts in Iowa are not required to offer this program. But over the years, since inception, we've gotten up to about 90 percent of the districts, and 314 out of 348 school districts a year ago were offering. So only 34 are not yet offering.

The ability of parents to enroll their kids in the programs offered by neighboring districts is quite liberal. So the access is pretty good, but not yet perfect. It is voluntary on the part of school districts. It is also voluntary on the part of parents and students. Parents are not required to enroll their kids in pre-Kindergarten. I'm going to learn from you and call it pre-Kindergarten, as best I can remember to do so.

So 100 percent participation is not our goal. But we do aim to increase our participation above the current level, and I'll talk about that in a couple of minutes.

As I said, the statewide voluntary program was started in the 2007–8 school year. The enrollment in 2012–13 was 21,400 students. One of the interesting aspects of our program is that we didn't want to force local areas to reinvent the wheel, so if there was an existing preschool program—sorry—prekindergarten program in the area, a school district was eligible to partner with that, provided that they met the quality standards established in the State program. Some districts have taken up that option and are partnering with nonprofit groups or even for-profit preschools in the State.

The funding currently is about \$3,060 per student per year. That's for the current fiscal year. It is tied to the per-student formula in statewide, so it's going to go up a little bit if we do allow the growth each year. The total currently is about \$66 million for the current school year.

The quality standards that I mentioned—it is a minimum of 10 hours per week. The people that we talked with up in Ames on Saturday are offering 12 hours per week. The State requires a licensed teacher, and the program must meet one of three established quality standards. So this is not glorified babysitting. This is real early childhood education with qualified teachers and certified programs. That's a summary of what we're doing with that program.

Let me talk about some of the results. Here, the best results have been reported by the Child and Family Policy Center. Charles

Bruner's and Anne Discher's report of last year—and a copy was submitted with my testimony—called, “Universal Preschool in Iowa Steps Needed to Ensure Equity and Access.” They have looked at our own programs here in Iowa, and it combines all of the programs here. But they have looked at kids who have and have not gone through that pre-Kindergarten program in terms of their reading proficiency in third grade.

They have several important findings. First of all, all kids from all groups benefit. They looked at the population in its entirety, and they also looked at certain demographic subgroups. In every case, there was gain. Kids who had gone through the pre-Kindergarten program in third grade had higher reading proficiency than the group of kids who had not.

Now, let me make one qualification here, because I'm going to talk a little bit about some of those subgroups. What I'm talking about here is statistic, not stereotype. We always have to be careful when we talk about various subgroups. There is a lot of variation within each group. Within each and every group, there are some kids who do fantastically well, and within each and every group, there are some kids who fall behind.

That being said, it turns out that the percentage of kids showing reading proficiency in third grade is lower for kids from low-income backgrounds, as indicated by eligibility for the Federal free and reduced price lunch program. That's the usual indicator. The same is true for African-American kids and kids from Hispanic families and Native Americans. For those three ethnic groups, on average, the reading proficiency at third grade is lower.

Each and every subgroup, though, gains. And one of the things that jumped out at me from the data is for the African-American kids and the Hispanic kids, their gains in terms of percentage point increase for reading proficiency in third grade—their percentage increase was among the highest. So these are the kids who were more likely to be behind, and yet they gained the most from the program.

But then there's the downside. The kids who gain the most, kids from those backgrounds, are the kids who are least likely to participate. We're not doing as good a job as we need to in reaching out to kids from low-income backgrounds and racial minorities to get them to participate. They are the ones who need it the most. They are the ones who benefit the most. But they are the ones who we are doing the least good job at reaching.

I'll just comment very briefly on a bill that we are working on in the State Senate. It has passed the Education Committee. It is in the Appropriations Committee, because there's an appropriation required. You understand about that legislative process. But we want, over the next 3 years, to create an incentive program for local districts to increase their enrollments.

We're using a baseline enrollment over the past 3 years, and increases above and beyond that will generate funding, not just the normal funding for the student participation, but a bonus funding as well of about an additional \$1,300 per student. That's intended to help school districts increase their capacities.

There are a number of school districts that have waiting lists. In other districts, they don't bother to keep waiting lists. They just

turn kids down. We don't have enough seats to meet the demand. The information is getting out there. The parents are learning. We've got to do a better job at getting even more parents interested in getting their kids signed up. But we also have to help the school districts to have the capacity to meet the demand.

So we have a cash incentive there for them to increase their enrollments over the next 3 years. We're also addressing some of the restrictions on the use of those funds. Transportation is one of the issues that we keep hearing about, and wraparound services.

I think you know that when we provide 10 or 12 hours a week, there's a lot of the rest of the time that the kids have to—their time has to be accounted for someplace, especially if parents are working. And, of course, Iowa has a very high percentage of two-parent families where both parents are working. There has to be transportation to child care, or there has to be child care onsite. We need to address those issues as well.

I think I've probably exhausted my time. I'd be happy to take any questions.

[The prepared statement of Senator Quirmbach follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HERMAN C. QUIRMBACH

SUMMARY

Programs in Iowa	Percent of 4-year-olds served
Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP)	48
Shared Visions, Early Childhood Special Education	4
Head Start	9
Early Childhood Iowa (formerly Empowerment)	NA

THE IOWA STATEWIDE VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (SVPP)

- Initiated 2007–8 school year.
- Enrollment in 2012–13: 21,402.
- Offered by 314 of 348 school districts.
- Local district can partner with private provider.
- Funding: \$3,060/student. Total: \$66.1M (2013–14).
- Hours: minimum of 10 hrs/wk.
- Requires licensed teacher.
- Must meet one of three sets of recognized quality standards.

SVPP RESULTS

The following table appears in “Universal Preschool in Iowa—Steps Needed to Ensure Equity and Access,” by Charles Bruner and Anne Discher, Child & Family Policy Center of Iowa, December 2013.

Parent-Reported Preschool Participation and Third Grade Reading Proficiency, 2011–12

	All students			Attended pre-k			No pre-k		
	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]
Total	36,006	27,607	76.7	26,597	21,027	79.1	9,409	6,580	69.9
FRL	13,515	8,646	64.0	8,689	5,709	65.7	4,826	2,937	60.9
No FRL	22,491	18,961	84.3	17,908	15,318	85.5	4,583	3,643	79.5
Wht	30,497	24,253	79.5	23,445	18,940	80.8	7,052	5,313	75.3
Blk	1,882	1,028	54.6	1,038	633	61.0	844	395	46.8
Hisp	2,703	1,589	58.8	1,531	971	63.4	1,172	618	52.7
Asian	777	641	82.5	497	428	86.1	280	213	76.1
NAm	147	96	65.3	86	55	64.0	61	41	67.2
IEP	2,190	1,056	48.2	1,635	785	48.0	555	271	48.8

Parent-Reported Preschool Participation and Third Grade Reading Proficiency, 2011–12—
Continued

	All students			Attended pre-k			No pre-k		
	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]	Tested	Proficient	Pct profic [percent]
ELL	2,094	1,177	56.2	986	606	61.5	1,108	571	51.5

Source: Iowa Department of Education.

Comparisons of the data show:

- A higher percentage of third graders are reading proficient in total and for almost all demographic subgroups among students who have attended preschool than among those who have not.
- Low-income (FRL=Free & Reduced Lunch eligible), black, Hispanic, and Native American students show lower percentages of reading proficiency than non-FRL and white and Asian students.
- Black and Hispanic student groups show larger percentage point differences in proficiency between preschool and non-preschool subgroups than do whites.

Moreover, students from several Iowa demographic groups who were furthest behind and had the most to gain were least likely to attend. According to the CFPC data, while 44.8 percent of non-FRL students participated in SVPP, only 38.8 percent of FRL students did. 44.7 percent of white students attended, but only 35.5 percent of Hispanics and 26.7 percent of African-Americans attended.

In Iowa several State and Federal programs for early childhood education are offered, including Early Childhood Iowa (formerly Empowerment), Shared Visions, Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, and the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP). My testimony today will focus mainly on the SVPP program, which is the largest and newest.

A number of supporting documents are provided with this testimony, with additional details on SVPP and information on the other programs. Most of the factual information reported here is derived from these supporting documents.

THE STATEWIDE VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (SVPP)

Initiated by the State of Iowa in the 2007–8 school year, the SVPP serves 4-year-old students from all backgrounds. It is currently voluntary from both the participant and provider sides: families are not required to enroll their children, and public school districts are not required to offer pre-kindergarten. In fact, however, in 2012–13, SVPP was offered by 314 of 348 school districts statewide, a 90 percent participation rate. In 2010–11, the enrollment was 19,799 or roughly 48 percent of all 4-year-olds. In 2012–13, enrollment increased to 21,402 4-year-olds.

At the start of the SVPP, the State awarded each participating school district a startup grant in the district's inaugural year of offering pre-kindergarten. Subsequently, funding was provided under the general State school funding formula. Funding is provided each year based on the enrollment count of the previous year. Since the pre-kindergarten program requires only a minimum of 10 hours per week of programming, each child in SVPP was originally funded at 0.6 of the funding for a full-time (e.g., first-grade) student. In 2011, that ratio was reduced to 0.5. For the 2013–14 school year, in general that translates to \$3,060 per pre-K student. Total State funding in 2012–13 was approximately \$60 million.

School districts may offer their own pre-kindergarten programs, or they may partner with existing non-profit or for-profit preschool providers, or they may combine the two modes. In any case, all State funds are directed through the local public school districts, and all SVPP offerings must meet certain quality standards. In particular, each SVPP program must offer at least 10 hours per week and be run by a teacher with an early childhood license. The adult-to-child ratio is to be 1-to-10, with a maximum class size of 20. Each program must also meet at least one of three approved program standards: the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, or the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

SVPP RESULTS

Two recent reports indicate positive results for students who have participated in SVPP classes. A May 2013 Fact Sheet from the Iowa Department of Education on the SVPP (provided with this testimony) states,

DIBELS [the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment tool] shows that proficiencies among all kindergarteners who attended the State preschool were 12 percentage points higher than those who did not. Even more impressive, the DIBELS results show only 33 percent of the children who attended the preschool program are at-risk while 44 percent of their counterparts are at-risk for achieving the necessary skills to become a successful reader.

The Fact Sheet also indicates that “far fewer students of poverty who attended the State preschool will require intensive intervention.”

A December 2013 report from the Child & Family Policy Center (CFPC) entitled “Universal Preschool in Iowa—Steps Needed to Ensure Equity and Access” by Charles Bruner and Anne Discher (also provided herewith) presents information on the third-grade reading proficiency of students who had and had not attended preschool. (These data lumped together both SVPP participants and participants in other preschool programs.) Of the Iowa third graders who had attended preschool, 79.1 percent were proficient in reading on the Iowa Assessments, while only 69.9 percent of third graders who had no preschool were proficient.

The CFPC report also presents demographic breakdowns for subgroups in Iowa. The usual indicator used to identify a student from a low-income background is eligibility for the Federal Free & Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) program. Among FRL students, about 5 percent more in the subgroup who had attended preschool were reading proficiently in third grade than were doing so in the FRL subgroup who had not attended preschool. Similarly, among non-FRL students, the percentage of students showed reading proficiency was about five points higher for those who had attended preschool over those non-FRL students who had not. The FRL subgroup who had attended preschool was about 20 percentage points behind non-FRL subgroup who had attended, and similarly for the FRL and non-FRL subgroups who had not attended.

The contrast between racial groups was dramatic. While white students who had attended preschool showed a five-point advantage in reading proficiency over whites who had not, the African-American and Hispanic students who had attended preschool had an advantage of 11 to 14 points over their counterparts who had not. Overall, 79.5 percent of whites were proficient, while only 54.6 percent of African-Americans and 58.8 percent of Hispanics were proficient.

In other words, these data showed that while third graders from every group had gained from having had preschool, those subgroups that were further behind (low-income, African-American, Hispanic) gained at least as much if not more from preschool.

SVPP PROBLEMS

Given the evidence of educational gains from preschool, the most obvious problems of the SVPP have to do with students who do not attend. In 2012–13, 34 districts (10 percent) still did not participate in SVPP at all. Of those that did, numerous districts did not meet all of demand. It is hard to know just how many 4-year-olds were denied access. Some districts maintained waiting lists, but some districts may simply have turned excess students away. (The term “waiting list” is certainly a misnomer. It seems likely that few students get into preschool off a waiting list. The rest just wait for kindergarten, having been denied a preschool experience.)

To my knowledge no statewide data were compiled on the number of 4-year-olds who wanted to participate in SVPP but who were denied access. Overall, in 2010–11 it appears that 35 percent of 4-year-olds did not attend SVPP or any other publicly supported preschool, though some may have attended private preschool and the parents of others may have chosen not to have their children attend at all.

Moreover, students from several Iowa demographic groups who were furthest behind—and therefore had the most to gain—were least likely to attend. According to the CFPC data, while 44.8 percent of non-FRL students participated in SVPP, only 38.8 percent of FRL students did. 44.7 percent of white students attended, but only 35.5 percent of Hispanics and 26.7 percent of African-Americans attended.

Additional and/or coexisting barriers to preschool attendance were presented by transportation issues and lack of wrap-around services. For example, for a parent who works full-time, facilitating a child attending a part-day preschool program probably requires leaving the job in the middle of the workday to transport the child between preschool and day care—assuming, that is, that the parent even has the

flexibility to leave work and that convenient, appropriate, affordable day care even can be found.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

To address some of the problems just discussed, the Iowa Senate Education Committee has recently proposed and passed Senate Study bill 3155. The bill, now designated Senate File 2268 (SF 2268), has been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee before going to the Senate floor.

Under SF 2268, participation in SVPP would still be voluntary for both the school district and for the individual student. However, the bill would set a goal to eliminate pre-kindergarten waiting lists by the start of the 2017–18 school year. Just as all school districts must provide a seat for every first-grade student who registers, so will every school district have to find a seat for every pre-kindergarten student who registers.

Financial incentives are provided to each local school district to meet the goal of eliminating waiting lists. The bill establishes a baseline SVPP enrollment period of the 3 school years from 2011–12 through 2013–14. The average SVPP enrollment in a district over those 3 years is the district's base enrollment over which to calculate any enrollment increase. (A zero would apply for any year in which a district did not offer SVPP.) Then, for the 3 school years beginning with 2015–16, for any increase in SVPP student numbers, a district would receive a 0.7 weighting, instead of the usual 0.5. A district would thus get about \$4,500 per student instead of the usual \$3,200 per student for each increase in the number of SVPP students. The \$1,300 per student difference is the capacity incentive.

The bill allows such additional aid to be used to help cover the costs of expanding capacity. The bill increases the percentage of the SVPP funding that can be used for administrative overhead from 5 percent to 10 percent. The bill clarifies that the costs of outreach activities and rent of space not owned by the school district are allowable administrative expenses. It also explicitly allows schools to transport preschool students to SVPP activities along with other children.

To qualify for the incentive aid, a school district would have to develop an approved expansion plan. Among other requirements, such a plan would have to specify how the district would reach out to solicit more participation, with special emphasis on low-income families, non-English speaking families, and families from ethnic and racial groups that were underrepresented in the school's SVPP program.

The CHAIRMAN. That was very good. Thank you very much, Senator Quirnbach.

Now, Susie Guest, welcome. And, again, thank you for all that you have done and are doing for early education in Des Moines.

STATEMENT OF SUSAN GUEST, DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS, DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DES MOINES, IA

Ms. GUEST. Thank you for having me this morning.

Des Moines Public Schools is the largest school district in the State of Iowa. It is home to approximately 32,000 students, and of those, approximately 2,000 are preschool students. As a district, we exist so that graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful at the next stage of their lives. For the Early Childhood Department, this equates to kindergarten readiness.

The majority of children attending preschool in Des Moines are funded through the statewide voluntary preschool program. The grant requires a minimum of 10 hours of instruction per week. However, Des Moines provides 13 hours per week at no additional charge to the parents. Classrooms are located throughout the district in early childhood schools, such as here at Mitchell, comprehensive elementary buildings, as well as partnerships with faith-based schools and private daycare settings.

Achieving high-quality preschool programming is accomplished through certified teaching staff, ongoing professional development, research-based curriculum and instruction, and regular analysis of

data. Recent data indicates children who attended preschool in the 2011–12 school year outperformed their kindergarten peers on initial assessments in the 2012–13 school year, and they continued to outperform their peers on the spring kindergarten assessments.

Beyond the classroom, what are other components of a high-quality program for young children? Family and community partnerships are key to providing quality programs. Family engagement begins at the time of enrollment and continues through conferencing, home visiting, resource and referral, and family educational opportunities. The Des Moines early childhood program is actively involved in community planning to encourage strong communication, cooperation, and the sharing of information between partners to improve recruitment and the delivery of services for students in our community.

The State of Iowa has invested in early childhood education. The statewide voluntary preschool program is a part of the State's efforts to provide more opportunities for 4-year-old children to access quality preschool and enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Children who participate in high-quality preschool settings exhibit better language and math skills, better cognitive and social skills, and better relationships with their classmates. Children who attend quality preschools are less likely to drop out, repeat grades, or need special education.

Des Moines Public Schools has successfully accomplished this most important mission of readying the children we serve for kindergarten. We have done so by making preschool a priority and braiding funding whenever possible. We have also created marvelous partnerships throughout the community. These partners are as committed to providing early childhood services as we are.

Two examples illustrate these successful partnerships. As a district, we are able to provide our families the services of school social workers through funding from the United Way Women's Leadership Connection. We are also able to provide case management and home visiting services through the financial support of Polk County Early Childhood Iowa. Such partnerships are essential for us to be able to do our jobs of educating the whole child.

However, the fact remains that we are only serving approximately 50 percent of the students enrolled in a Des Moines Public Schools kindergarten program. Significant barriers remain for families and districts. For the families that work, the 13 hours of preschool per week is not enough. For others, transportation is not available, and a preschool may not exist within walking distance.

For districts, the needs of our families require more than 10 hours per week of funding for preschool. In Des Moines Public Schools, with 70 percent of families qualifying for free and reduced lunch and 16 percent of families identified as English language learners, their needs for comprehensive services are great. Currently, only 29 percent of our preschool slots are designated for families at 200 percent of poverty or below.

With any new early learning legislation, consideration should be given to policies to improve access and to expand enrollment of at-risk children in full-day preschool programming. Doing so will provide our neediest children with expanded services in all areas of development.

Additionally, funding for family and instructional support services has to be part of the equation. Preschool is not just about academic instruction. Although extremely important, it is just one piece of the puzzle. Early childhood education has the greatest impact when programming is comprehensive and responsive to the needs of our families and our children.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Guest follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN GUEST

SUMMARY

Children's experiences in their first years have a profound impact on the course of the rest of their lives. Evidence now proves not only the dynamic learning potential of children when they are in responsive, nurturing, stimulating environments, but also the detrimental effect to children when they are deprived of these opportunities. There has been a dramatic shift in this country in the past 50 years and more 3- and 4-year-old children are attending preschool. These changing demographics speak both to the tremendous need and opportunity for research-based, practice-proven early childhood education.

Des Moines Public Schools—Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) is a leader and innovator in public education, offering families more educational choices than any place in Iowa. High quality preschool programming is one of the many choices offered by the district with a goal of readying all children for kindergarten.

DMPS Early Childhood Programs—Achieving high quality preschool programming is the goal of our programs. Our certified teaching staff participates in ongoing professional development supported with instructional coaching which are indicators of high quality programs. Further, our curriculum, instruction and assessment are developmentally appropriate and research based. In addition to analyzing data at the classroom level, data is also analyzed at the district level to ensure our preschools students are ready for kindergarten.

Family and Community Partnerships—Family partnerships begin at the time of enrollment and continue with parents after enrollment to ensure the best possible preschool experience for the children and families we serve. Through strong relationships with parents and community partners we work together toward the goal of having all children ready for kindergarten. We support families through home visiting, by providing resources and referrals to support services, and providing families with educational opportunities. The DMPS Early Childhood Program is actively involved in community planning to encourage strong communication, cooperation, and the sharing of information between partners to improve the delivery of services for students in the community.

Benefits of Preschool in Iowa—The State of Iowa has invested in early childhood education. The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program is a part of the State's efforts to provide more opportunities for 4-year-old children to access quality preschool and enter kindergarten ready to learn. The SWVPP along with other State and federally funded preschool programs and community partners in Iowa make up Iowa's system for delivering preschool programming.

Future Priorities—Des Moines Public Schools has successfully accomplished this most important mission of readying the children we serve for kindergarten. We have done so by making preschool a priority and braiding funding whenever possible. We have also created marvelous partnerships throughout the community. However, the fact remains that we are only serving approximately 50 percent of the students enrolled in a DMPS kindergarten program. Significant barriers remain for families and districts.

With any new early learning legislation, consideration should be given to policies to improve access to and expand enrollment of at-risk children in full-day preschool programming. Doing so will provide our neediest children with expanded services in all areas of development. Additionally, funding for family and instructional support services has to be part of the equation. Preschool is not just about providing academic instruction. Although extremely important, it is just one piece of the puzzle. Early education can truly endow children with the necessary foundation for future learning. Early childhood education programs can and do play a pivotal role in providing crucial learning experiences for children and their families.

A child's first years are a time of amazing growth. Young children set out as eager explorers seeking to understand the world and their place in it. For children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, their natural tendency to learn needs to be supported and actively engaged in powerful learning experiences. Research is dramatically revealing just how much complex knowledge children can master at much earlier ages than previously thought. Children's experiences in their first years have a profound impact on the course of the rest of their lives. Evidence now proves not only the dynamic learning potential of children when they are in responsive, nurturing, stimulating environments, but also the detrimental effect to children when they are deprived of these opportunities.

There has been a dramatic shift in this country in the past 50 years. The 2011 Current Population Survey of School Enrollment finds that 48 percent of all 3- and 4-year-old children attend a classroom-based program in child care, Head Start, or preschool. By choice or by necessity, more children than ever before in our Nation's history spend significant amounts of time in an out-of-home environment. At the same time, the requirements for children's school readiness upon entering kindergarten have risen considerably, as spelled out in our State standards. These changing demographics speak both to the tremendous need and opportunity for research-based, practice-proven early childhood education.

DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Des Moines Public Schools is the largest school district in the State of Iowa. It is home to approximately 32,000 students and 5,000 employees. For more than 100 years Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) has provided an outstanding education for students of our community. Today, our school district is a leader and innovator in public education, offering families more educational choices than any place in Iowa. One of the great strengths of Des Moines Public Schools is its diversity: the people, the programs, and most of all the opportunities for our students. The strengths and benefits which result from that diversity are reflected each and every day in the accomplishments of our students and staff. As a district we exist so that graduates possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to be successful at the next stage of their lives. For the early childhood department this equates to kindergarten readiness.

Des Moines Public Schools was awarded the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) grant in the 2007-8 school year. The program started with 1,046 students. Our current SWVPP serves 1,352 students with another 562 students served by other funding sources for a total of 1,914 students. Head Start funds 424 students and the remaining approximately 138 students are funded through State Shared Visions, Early Childhood Iowa, or a Prairie Meadows grant. Each funding source is accountable to a different but similar set of standards or guidelines. We have created consistency throughout our district early childhood classrooms by raising the standards of all our rooms to the highest level possible given differing levels of funding and requirements. Even though the funding and required standards from one classroom to another may be different, the academic expectations for every preschool classroom across the district are the same. With a high mobility rate, consistent expectations ensure quality.

The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program serves the majority of DMPS students. The grant requires a minimum of 10 hours of instruction per week. However, DMPS provides 13 hours per week at no additional charge to parents. Classrooms are located throughout the district in early childhood schools, comprehensive elementary buildings as well as partnerships with faith-based schools and private daycare settings. We offer a continuum of services including half-day free preschool programming, full-day programming for qualified families, and integrated special education services.

DMPS EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

According to Webster's dictionary quality is a degree of excellence. I am frequently asked, what makes our Des Moines Public Schools early childhood program excellent? In contemplating this question many things come to mind, but one answer far outweighs the rest, in fact, it is the key to all the rest. What makes our program excellent is our staff. We have outstanding certified teachers that lead each classroom and are supported in their work daily by our invaluable teacher associates. It is the awesome job of our certified teachers to bring all the components of our program together and carry out all of the program requirements in a way that is developmentally appropriate, meaningful, and fun for children. Without our high-quality certified staff leading the program I'm confident our students would not leave our classrooms as prepared for kindergarten as they are today. All early childhood teachers have, at minimum, a bachelor's degree with an endorsement in early

childhood education. All classroom associates have child development certifications or other qualifying degrees.

“A growing body of evidence now points to the key role of the educator in how much a young child learns. In fact, according to research by Darling-Hammonds and associates, the knowledge and skills of the teacher account for a greater difference in academic achievement than any other single factor.”

In a Spring 2010 article in *American Educator* titled, “The Promise of Preschool” the co-directors of NIEER, the National Institute for Early Education Research, describe 10 research-based benchmarks for quality early childhood education. No. 1 on the list is that teachers should have a bachelor’s degree and specialized training in preschool education. In addition they should receive the same salaries and benefits as other public school teachers.

The professional development of teachers has also been shown to be highly correlated to the quality of early childhood programs and thus the overall effect of those programs in having a positive outcome for children. As our staff can attest our district and early childhood department have a strong commitment to ongoing quality professional development that keeps pace with current guidelines, research in the field, and resulting best practice. All early childhood staff receives professional development to enhance their skills in the delivery of instruction, progress monitoring, and making instructional accommodations to meet individual needs. The program professional development plan is based on individual staff needs as well as program evaluation and student data and is written and shared with staff. The following subjects are also included in annual professional development: ethics, policies & procedures, curriculum/instruction/assessment, teaming, family engagement. Current professional development initiatives include Response to Intervention, Math Strategies, Curriculum Scaffolding and Differentiation, and Cognitive Complexity and a Rigorous Curriculum.

We also offer instructional coaching support for classroom teachers. Coaching ensures effective implementation of required instructional strategies in all classrooms. Coaching services may include but are not limited to: classroom observations with feedback/reflection, identification of coaching focus, collaborative planning, modeling instruction and discussion of available resources. The instructional coaches have all completed specialized training in coaching strategies.

Beyond the classroom teacher, what are other components of a high-quality program for young children?

In these early years curriculum should be developmentally responsive and attend to children’s social, emotional, and physical, as well as cognitive growth. All DMPS early childhood programs implement a planned, organized and consistently implemented curriculum supporting child development. The curriculum strategies are research-based, developmentally appropriate and include all domains of learning. The Pre-K curriculum used is aligned with the literacy curriculum used district-wide in our elementary schools. This consistency is a great support for our students as they transition from preschool to kindergarten.

We also take seriously the research that self-regulation is a stronger predictor of elementary school success than IQ. This is good news because we can more easily effect self-regulation than we can IQ. Given this important finding many of our instructional strategies are designed to promote self-regulation as well as other early literacy and cognitive skills. Our instructional strategies allow children to develop abstract thinking, verbal and social skills along with self-regulation. In our program, learning experiences actively build new knowledge on children’s existing understandings, in part through purposeful play and exploration.

In Des Moines Public Schools, 16.3 percent of students are English Language Learners. In fact over 80 different languages are spoken in DMPS classrooms. This is also the case in preschool. However, preschool students are not included in the ELL funding formula at the State level and students are not identified until kindergarten. In turn, as a department, we have addressed the need for ELL support by implementing a department-wide English Language Acquisition Plan. Professional development has been provided to the teaching staff in the implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional methods to support ELL students. Identified strategies are an expectation of all classrooms.

In a quality program, appropriate assessment both formal and informal, should be ongoing and always inform instruction. In this aspect, as in all aspects of children’s learning, strong connections and partnerships with children’s families are vital. We provide developmental and social/emotional screening as well as comprehensive health screening for all children in the program. The screenings have a strong parent component and so begin the year by opening the conversation and beginning the partnership between the teacher and the family that will grow through-

out the year. We also use a comprehensive assessment tool to assess children's progress across all domains of learning. The tool also helps guide the teaching staff in planning for developmentally appropriate next steps to scaffold each child's learning. Differentiation of instruction occurs as a result of analysis of formative/summative data which directs instruction. Gender, culture, language, ethnicity, family composition and parent input are all areas of respected individualization.

In addition to analyzing data at the classroom level, data is also analyzed at the district level to ensure our preschool students are ready for kindergarten. A comparison was completed between children who attended a 2011/2012 DMPS preschool program with children who did not attend preschool and their progress on fall and spring district-wide kindergarten assessment during the 2012–13 school year. Although all children who attended DMPS preschool outscored their non-preschool peers, of special interest was a comparison of the 73 percent of children who were eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch. The results indicate that children eligible for Free/Reduced Priced Lunch academically benefited from attending a DMPS preschool program. Their academic advantage was not only evident on the fall kindergarten assessments but continued into the spring on the kindergarten standards-based math and reading assessments. On the math assessment, 80 percent of the DMPS preschool children were proficient vs. 72 percent of the children who did not attend preschool. On the reading assessment, 86.4 percent of the DMPS preschool program children were proficient vs. 76.6 percent of the children who did not attend preschool.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Family partnerships begin at the time of enrollment. Preschool enrollment is completed at one central location, The Des Moines Public Schools Enrollment Center. Centralizing the enrollment process has assisted families in determining the type of programming that will best meet their needs. A specialist in the area of preschool enrollment meets with families and takes into consideration full/part-day programming needs, income verification, and program location. Applications can be completed on-line or in person at the Enrollment Center if assistance is needed. A comprehensive recruitment plan has been established to provide information to families and increase awareness of our programs. Yard signs and flyers are used to advertise in the community as well as advertisements in the local papers and radio stations. Customized enrollment events have been held at local apartment complexes of high need. Recruitment materials are translated in many languages.

Family partnerships continue with parents after enrollment to ensure the best possible preschool experience for the children and families we serve. Through strong relationships with parents and community partners we work together toward the goal of having all children ready for kindergarten. We support parents as they identify and work toward family goals, by providing resources and referrals to community resources, and providing families with educational opportunities. Multiple parent engagement opportunities help foster a positive home/school relationship and positive child outcomes. A variety of opportunities are available for parent and teacher engagement on a regular basis throughout the school year. Parents are welcome to visit at any time throughout the school day and are encouraged to participate as least weekly in classroom activities through a program called Parent and Child Together time. In addition, home visits and parent/teacher conferences are held throughout the school year to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both staff and parents of the educational and developmental progress and activities of children at home and in the classroom. Further family engagement activities include district-wide and regional family events, family lending libraries, monthly newsletters and transition to kindergarten support. Services to support families are provided by a comprehensive team of professionals including nurses, school social workers and home visiting case managers.

The DMPS Early Childhood Program is actively involved in community planning to encourage strong communication, cooperation, and the sharing of information between partners to improve the delivery of services for students in the community. The DMPS Early Childhood Advisory committee meets monthly and includes community stakeholder representatives including Drake University Head Start, Early Childhood Iowa, United Way of Central Iowa, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Partners, the Area Education Agency as well as DMPS ELL, Health, and Assessment departments. In addition, the DMPS Early Childhood Program participates in community focus groups including the Urban Core, Preschool Advisory Committee, Project Launch, Iowa Department of Education Early Childhood Network, and the Urban Educator Network.

Through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program grant, DMPS has also established partnerships with local faith-based schools and day care centers to provide preschool programming at their sites. All Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards must be adhered to and program monitoring is provided by DMPS.

BENEFITS OF PRESCHOOL IN IOWA

There are approximately 2,000 days between birth and the first day of kindergarten. Research illustrates that the first 2,000 days of a child's life can have a profound and lifelong impact on physical and emotional well-being, readiness to learn and succeed, and the ability to become a productive employee and citizen. Research tells us that we need to start at the earliest age, birth to age 5. During this time children's brains develop 90 percent of their capacity, which lays the foundation for academic skills and behavior traits that will last a life time. Research also tells us that:

- By age 3, children of low-income families know only half as many words as children of more advantaged families.
- Children who do not get a good start can arrive in kindergarten already 18 months behind.
- Children who aren't ready for kindergarten are half as likely to read proficiently by third grade.
- Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are four times as likely to drop out of high school.

For all the above reasons, the State of Iowa has invested in early childhood education. The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program is a part of the State's efforts to provide more opportunities for children to access quality preschool and enter kindergarten ready to learn. The SWVPP along with other State and federally funded preschool programs and community partners in Iowa—Head Start, Shared Visions, Early Childhood Iowa, and Early Childhood Special Education—make up Iowa's system for delivering preschool programming.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

Is Iowa's system for delivering preschool programming enough? Is it a comprehensive system?

Unfortunately, the answer is no. It is a good start but the SWVPP does not go far enough. The program offers a minimum of 10 hours per week of quality preschool instruction. And districts receive only half of the funding that is provided for K-12 students. In turn, funding does not go as far as needed and families have more needs than ever before.

Family Barriers to Enrollment

- 10 hours a week of programming is not enough for families with parents that work or are full-time students. Wrap around (before and after) care is costly.
- Transportation to and from preschool is not provided and many families do not have transportation. Preschool programs may not be within walking distance of the family residence.
- The first-come, first-served universal access of the SWVPP does not give our low-income families any priority in enrollment.
- In districts with a high ELL population, language can be a barrier to enrollment.

School District Challenges to Providing Preschool Programming

- Funding for physical plant growth/building costs is not allowable. In Des Moines, we have created early learning centers where multiple classrooms are housed under one roof. Currently we have three such centers, soon to be four. The creation of early learning centers was essential to expanding preschool programming because additional space is not available in our comprehensive school buildings.
- Food is not an allowable cost under the SWVPP grant. With 70+ percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, providing a daily snack is essential for learning.
- Transportation to/from preschool is an allowable expense; however, it is a considerable expense and providing transportation would severely limit the number of preschool slots we could provide.
- Securing interpretation and translation services (80+ languages in DMPS) to support families is expensive and services are limited. The early childhood department uses the district ELL services whenever possible; however, frequently we have to secure the services of private companies at a cost of \$47 per hour.

- A minimum of 10 hours is required by the SWVPP; however, DMPS provides 13 hours per week at no additional cost to the family. Charging fees for registration or additional hours are allowable expenses, but ones that our families would not be able to afford.
- Funding is limited for administrative costs (5 percent) which do not cover expenses for program oversight, enrollment, and management.
- Funding for social work, nursing and coaching support staff are allowable costs but such positions do not generate funds. Support positions are key to providing quality services.
- 70.6 percent of DMPS families are eligible for Free/Reduced Priced Lunch and only 27 percent of enrollment slots are designated for low-income children (non-SWVPP slots) 200 percent of poverty or below.
- There are sufficient half-day slots for preschool students; however, it is difficult to fill all of them due to the barriers listed above.
- In 2007–8 when the original grant was awarded to DMPS, we received .6 of the K–12 per pupil funding for each preschool student. In 2011–12, the amount of funding decreased from .6 to .5 of the K–12 per pupil funding for each preschool student. Revenue decreased but expenditures of teacher salaries and benefits increased as they do each year.

Even in view of the many barriers to providing exemplary preschool services to families, Des Moines Public Schools has successfully accomplished this most important mission of readying the children we serve for kindergarten. However, the fact remains that we are only serving approximately 50 percent of the students enrolled in a DMPS kindergarten program. We have done so by making preschool a priority and braiding funding whenever possible. We have also created marvelous partnerships throughout the community. These partners are also committed to providing early childhood services. Two examples illustrate these successful partnerships. We are able to provide families the services of school social workers using the Mental Health Consultation Model through funding from the United Way Women's Leadership Connection. We are also able to provide Case Management and Home Visiting services through the financial support of Polk County Early Childhood Iowa. Such partnerships are essential for us to be able to do our job of educating the whole child.

With any new early learning legislation, consideration should be given to policies to improve access to and expand enrollment of at-risk children in full-day preschool programming. Doing so will provide our neediest children with expanded services in all areas of development. Additionally, funding for family and instructional support services has to be part of the equation. Preschool is not just about providing academic instruction. Although extremely important, it is just one piece of the puzzle. There is clear and quantitative documentation of the positive effect of high-quality preschool programs. Early education can truly endow children with the necessary foundation for future learning. Early childhood education programs can and do play a pivotal role in providing crucial learning experiences for children and their families. Extensive research firmly establishes that high-quality programs for young children have a long-term, positive effect on children's well-being and academic success.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Now we'll turn to Barbara Merrill, executive director of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children.

Barb, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF BARBARA MERRILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
IOWA ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN,
DES MOINES, IA**

Ms. MERRILL. Good morning, Senator Harkin. I am honored by this opportunity to be here with you today. All of us would like to acknowledge you and all of the work that you have done throughout your career in Washington and, in particular, for introducing the Strong Start legislation.

I'm a new grandmother of two infants, and I watch my children and their spouses doing all the right things as they nurture their children's growth, health, and learning. And yet they also must depend on extended family, healthcare providers, child care providers,

and many others to support them. Many hands and many hearts are helping my children raise my grandchildren.

Many of Iowa's children do not have these circles of support immediately surrounding them, even if we all wished that they did. It's up to us to ensure that all children, beginning at birth, are given every opportunity to be healthy and successful. At Iowa AEYC, our mission is to serve and act on behalf of the early childhood education profession and the role played by high-quality, educated, and competent professionals in the lives of very young children.

Research has shown us that the qualifications of the teacher and the interactions between those adults and the children in their care is one of the primary indicators of a high-quality preschool or child care experience for our youngest children. We must make sure that we have a high-quality early education workforce.

Do you know that the child care workforce is traditionally among the poorest paid workforces in our country? According to Iowa Workforce Development, only fast-food cooks, dishwashers, and store clerks make less per hour than child care center staff and family child care providers.

Iowa's Center and Family Child Care Wage Study in 2010 found these caregiving and teaching staff averages between \$8.50 and \$10.75 per hour, depending on their specific job role. The workforce is mostly women, many mothers, often single heads of households, more often women of color, earning well under the poverty level as they care for our most precious possessions, our children.

We talk about three workforces impacted by early childhood education today: the parents and families who can work today because they have child care; the workforce of the future, today's children who benefit from high-quality early childhood education today; and today's early childhood educators who are working directly with children every day.

In Iowa, we estimate that the child care workforce numbers over 20,000. Consider 20,000 taxpaying citizens earning mostly poverty level wages as they provide care and developmental learning opportunities with Iowa's young children, sometimes for 10 hours a day. Often, these teachers have to rely on one or more forms of public assistance just to support their own families. We estimate that 60 percent of this workforce do not hold a college degree in early childhood education or a closely related field.

We cannot pass the cost of educating and increasing compensation for this workforce on to today's young families. Parents of children ages birth to 5 are at the beginning of their careers, often not taking home significant paychecks yet themselves. We must ensure that State and Federal child care assistance is adequate to allow programs to pay fair wages, and that programs such as Iowa's Quality Rating System require adequate wages and educated staff if they are to be considered quality programs.

Our State struggles to make decisions on spending limited Federal funding, trying to balance the need for quality supports for the programs and the workforce with enough quantity of child care assistance to serve low-income working families. We need clear direction from the Federal Government to the States about the use of Federal funding to ensure both needs are met adequately.

We also must support child care as we continue to support pre-K. Before first grade, many children spend 10,000 hours in a child care program. Children and families deserve comprehensive services within each program and should not be forced to piece together a 10-hour week preschool with child care wraparound at a different location and family, friend, and neighbor care filling in the gaps.

We understand the importance of continuity of care for infants, toddlers, and young children. What is inappropriate is to expect young children to adjust to two, three, or even more early education environments every week when one comprehensive, full-time, well-supported program incorporating preschool and the family's need for child care is best for the child and the family.

We want to see a requirement that all early childhood programs meet a quality standard and have educated, qualified teachers. We applaud that the Strong Start bill would make it possible to use funding to support the current workforce to earn a degree in early childhood education. I suggest you require the States to target funding this way, earmarking some of the money specifically for the purpose of workforce education and compensation.

States should be required to use funding to improve child care provider compensation when this workforce earns their degrees and become highly effective teachers. As is occurring in New Jersey and North Carolina, we should consider supporting teachers who are currently in classrooms as they work toward earning their degrees, allowing programs meeting a quality standard to use pre-K funding, but then requiring enrollment in a degree program if the teacher does not have a degree and ensure that full compensation parity happens when degrees are completed.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood program has been improving the education, compensation, and retention of the early childhood education workforce all across the country. Following a national model, State nonprofits in 24 States and the District of Columbia are licensed by Child Care Services Association North Carolina to deliver these scholarships that include a broad array of support, including a counselor; support for tuition, books, and transportation; and paid substitute time. Compensation initiatives are mandated in every model.

Iowa has been a proud T.E.A.C.H. State for over 10 years. We have viewed our efforts as having multi-generational impact in three different ways. No. 1, we create a more knowledgeable and skilled teacher. We know that the young children in her classroom are getting better outcomes. Each year, a new group of children in these classrooms reap the benefits of a better educated, more effective teacher. We also know that parents are able to be more productive at work if they feel comfortable about their child's caregiver.

The second way is by going to college, these teachers, often first-generation college students, raise their expectations for their own children. They now expect their own children to go to college. We hear stories of mothers and children doing their homework together.

The third way is by earning degrees, these teachers realize upward career mobility, earning more money and having more professional opportunities in the field. This, in turn, benefits her family

economically, moving some of these teachers and their children out of poverty.

Every year across the country, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood reaches 20,000 recipients who complete over 100,000 college credits and have grade point averages well in excess of 3.0. Teachers complete 13 or 14 credit hours annually, on average, and continue to work full-time. Their annual earnings increase from 5 percent to 8 percent. They remain in the field, and with a field typical turnover of 40 percent, T.E.A.C.H. turnover is always less than 10 percent.

This year, we began offering pilots in Iowa for a compensation supplement program called WAGE\$. T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and Wage supplements help the early childhood workforce become better educated, compensated, and more consistent, as they strive to meet the higher standards associated with pre-K, Head Start, and Quality Rating Systems.

While attending college, teachers' basic language and math literacy skills improve, as well as their knowledge of children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Targeting a direct investment to the current workforce means quality can be raised without burdening parents with additional costs.

In Iowa, child care, family child care, preschool, Head Start, and family support teachers and administrators can access T.E.A.C.H. T.E.A.C.H. is funded by the Child Care Development Fund, by the MIECHV grant Federal funding, by United Way, and by State funding through Early Childhood Iowa. Our WAGE\$ pilot is supported by United Way of Central Iowa's Women's Leadership Connection.

We do not have funding for T.E.A.C.H. targeted for our statewide voluntary preschool program, although the demand from that sector is great, and we have many folks on that program who work in State pre-K. We buy local. Every Iowa-based college offering early childhood degree programs is eligible to accept T.E.A.C.H. tuition payments.

To support the current workforce with appropriate higher ed, we talk about quality, accessibility, and affordability of college for child care providers. We must support the higher ed career pathway for this workforce as well.

Is the quality of higher education meeting the demands of a future teaching workforce? Despite an ever-increasing online option, is appropriate and quality higher education available for all throughout rural Iowa? And for a workforce earning an average of \$10 an hour, how do we keep it affordable? This workforce should not be taking out student loans if they won't be able to pay them off.

Articulation continues to be a problem. Will the credits completed at a local community college be recognized when the child care teacher works to earn a bachelor's degree and an Iowa teaching license at a university? We call this earning credits with currency, and like training hours, college credits stay on one transcript forever. But they have to be recognized at the next level of one's education to be meaningful.

Community college credits should be of high enough quality to be accepted to meet the requirements of the public universities. And all our publicly funded institutions must consider the needs of the

adult learner as these students work to support their own families, spend time with their own children, work, and complete college credits.

Low education, poor compensation, and high turnover are national child care workforce issues. It's time to address them on a national level. Tomorrow's workforce, our most precious resource, our children, are depending on us.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Merrill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BARBARA MERRILL

SUMMARY

Research has shown us that the qualifications of the teacher, and the interactions between those adults and the children in their care, is one of the primary indicators of a high quality preschool or child care environment and experience for our youngest children. We must make sure that we have a high quality early childhood workforce.

Three workforces are impacted by early childhood education: The parents and families who can work TODAY because they have child care; the workforce of the future, today's children who benefit from high quality early childhood education; and today's early childhood educators, working directly with children every day.

The quality of early care and education is directly linked to teacher education and compensation. We cannot pass the costs of educating and increasing compensation for this workforce on to today's young families. Parents of children ages birth to 5 are at the beginning of their careers, often not taking home significant paychecks themselves. We must ensure that State and Federal Child Care Assistance is adequate to pay fair wages, and that programs such as Quality Rating Systems require adequate wages and educated staff if they are to be considered quality programs.

To support the current workforce with appropriate higher education, we talk about the quality, accessibility and affordability of college for our child care providers. We must support the higher education career pathways for this workforce as well.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® is a national model and has been on improving the education, compensation and retention of the early care and education workforce—child care, PreK, and family support—across the country for nearly 25 years. When we target the direct investment to the current workforce we will raise quality without burdening parents with additional costs. When we improve the quality of the workforce, we can improve the quality of the programs, so that these community-based child care programs can be appropriate sites for birth through age 5 comprehensive early education experiences for all of our children.

Good afternoon Senator Harkin and other honorable guests. My name is Barbara Merrill and I am the executive director of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, Iowa's State affiliate for NAEYC. I also manage the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood program for the State of Iowa, and work to support the Early Childhood Iowa comprehensive system building efforts for services for children ages birth to 5 and their families. I am honored with this opportunity to be here with you today. All of us would like to acknowledge the work of Senator Harkin throughout his career in Washington, and in particular for introducing the Strong Start legislation.

As a new grandmother of two infants, I see my children and their spouses *doing all the right things* as they nurture their children's growth, health and learning. And yet, they also must depend on extended family, health care providers, child care teachers, and many others to support them: It takes a village to raise children. Many of Iowa's children do not have these circles of support immediately surrounding them, even if we all wish they did. It is up to us to ensure that all children, beginning at birth, are given every opportunity to be healthy and successful.

At Iowa AEYC, our mission is to serve and act on behalf of the early childhood education profession, and the role played by high quality, educated and competent professionals in the lives of young children.

Research has shown us that the qualifications of the teacher, and the interactions between those adults and the children in their care, is one of the primary indicators of a high-quality preschool or child care environment and experience for our young-

est children. We must make sure that we have a high-quality early childhood workforce.

Do you know that the child care workforce is traditionally among the poorest paid workforces in our country? According to Iowa Workforce Development, only fast food cooks, dishwashers, and store clerks make less per hour than child-care center staff and family child-care providers. Iowa's *Center and Family Child Care Wage Study*, in 2010, found these caregiving and teaching staff average between \$8.50–\$10.75 per hour, depending on their specific job role. This workforce is mostly women, many mothers, often single heads of household, more often women of color—earning well under the poverty level as they care for our most precious possessions, our children.

We talk about three workforces impacted by early childhood education: The parents and families who can work TODAY because they have child care; the workforce of the future, today's children who benefit from high quality early childhood education; and today's early childhood educators, working directly with children every day. In Iowa, we estimate the child care workforce to number over 20,000. Consider 20,000 tax-paying citizens earning mostly poverty-level wages providing care and developmental learning opportunities with Iowa's young children, sometimes for 10 hours a day. We estimate 40 percent of this workforce do not hold a college degree in early childhood education or a closely related field.

We cannot pass the costs of educating and increasing compensation for this workforce on to today's young families. Parents of children ages birth to 5 are at the beginning of their careers, often not taking home significant paychecks themselves. We must ensure that State and Federal Child Care Assistance is adequate to pay fair wages, and that programs such as Quality Rating Systems require adequate wages and educated staff if they are to be considered quality programs.

Our State struggles to make decisions on spending limited Federal funding, trying to balance the need for quality supports for the programs and the workforce with enough quantity of child care assistance for low-income working families. We need clear direction with any Federal funding, to ensure both needs are met adequately.

We also must support child care as we continue to support Pre-K. Before first grade, many children spend 10,000 hours in a child care program. Children and families deserve comprehensive services within each program, and should not be forced to piece together a 10-hour a week preschool with child care wrap around at a different location, and family, friend and neighbor care filling in the gaps. We understand the importance of continuity of care, for infants, toddlers, and young children. What is inappropriate is to expect young children to adjust to two, three or even more early education environments each week, when one comprehensive, full-time, well-supported program, incorporating preschool and the family's need for child care, would be preferred. We want to see a requirement that ALL early childhood programs meet quality standards and have educated, qualified teachers.

We applaud that the Strong Start bill would make it possible to use the funding to support the current workforce to earn a degree in early childhood education. I suggest you require the States to target the funding this way, earmarking some of the money specifically for the purpose of workforce education and compensation. States should be required to use some of the funding to improve child care provider compensation as this workforce earn their degrees and become highly effective teachers. As occurred in New Jersey, we should consider supporting these teachers as they work toward earning their degrees, allowing programs meeting a quality standard to use the PreK funding, but requiring enrollment in a degree program, and ensuring full compensation parity when degrees are completed.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® has been on improving the education, compensation and retention of the early care and education workforce across the country. Following a national model, State nonprofits in 24 States and the District of Columbia are licensed by Child Care Services Association, North Carolina, to deliver these scholarships that include a broad array of support including a counselor, support for tuition, books and transportation, and paid release time. Compensation incentives are a mandated part of every model. Iowa is a proud T.E.A.C.H. State, for over 10 years. We are provided with support from CCSA to insure model fidelity, accountability, uniform data collection and integrity, ongoing technical assistance and strategy development.

We have viewed our efforts as having multi-generational impact, in three ways:

1. By creating a more knowledgeable and skilled teacher, we know that the young children in their classrooms are getting better outcomes. Each year a new group of children in these classrooms reap the benefit of a better-educated, more effective teacher. We also know parents are able to be more productive at work if they feel comfortable about their child's caregiver.

2. By going to college, these teachers, often first generation college students, raise their expectations for their own children. They now expect their children to go to college. We hear stories of mothers and children doing their homework together.

3. By earning degrees, these teachers realize upward career mobility, earning more money and having more professional opportunities in the field. This in turn benefits her family economically, moving some of these teachers and their children out of poverty.

Each year, across the country, T.E.A.C.H. reaches nearly 20,000 scholarship recipients. They complete well over 100,000 college credit hours, with grade point averages in excess of 3.0 at both the associate and bachelor level. Teachers on an Associate or Bachelor Degree scholarship complete an average of 13–14 credit hours annually, while working full-time. Their annual earnings increase from 5–8 percent. And they remain in their classrooms and in the field. In a field with typical annual turnover nearly 40 percent, our turnover is always less than 10 percent.

This year, we've begun offering pilots in Iowa for a compensation supplement program called WAGE\$. T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and wage supplements help the early childhood workforce become better educated, compensated and more consistent as it strives to meet the higher standards associated with pre-kindergarten, Head Start and Quality Rating Systems. While attending college, teachers' basic language and math literacy skills improve, as well as their knowledge of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. And targeting the direct investment to the current workforce means that quality can be raised without burdening parents with additional costs.

In Iowa, child care, family child care, preschool, Head Start, and family support teachers and administrators access T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. T.E.A.C.H. is funded by the Child Care Development Fund, by the MIECHV grant funding, by United Way, and by State funding through Early Childhood Iowa. Our WAGE\$ pilot is supported by United Way of Central Iowa. We do not have funding especially targeted for our statewide voluntary preschool program, although the demand from that sector is great. We "buy local", with every Iowa-based college offering early childhood degree programs eligible to benefit from T.E.A.C.H. tuition payments.

To support the current workforce with appropriate higher education, we talk about the quality, accessibility and affordability of college for our child care providers. We must support the higher education career pathways for this workforce as well. Is the quality of the higher education meeting the demands of the current and future teaching workforce? Despite the ever-increasing on-line options, is appropriate and quality higher education available to all throughout rural Iowa? And for our workforce earning an average of \$10 per hour, how do we keep it affordable for all, without requiring this workforce to take out student loans that might be difficult to pay off?

Articulation continues to be a problem. Will the credits completed at a local community college be recognized when the child care teacher works to earn a bachelor's degree and Iowa teaching license at a university? We call this earning *credits with currency*: unlike just training hours, college credits stay on one's transcript forever. But they have to be recognized at the next level of one's education to be meaningful. Community college credits should be of high enough quality to be accepted to meet requirements at the public universities. And all of our publicly funded institutions must consider the needs of the adult learner as these students work, support and nurture their own families, and earn college credits.

Low education, poor compensation and high turnover are national workforce issues. It is time to address them on a national level. Tomorrow's workforce, and our most precious resource, depends on it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Barb.

And now we'll turn to Christi Regan, director of Head Start for HACAP, Hawkeye Area Community Action Agency over in Cedar Rapids.

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTI REGAN, HEAD START DIRECTOR,
HAWKEYE AREA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC., HIA-
WATHA, IA**

Ms. REGAN. Good morning, Senator Harkin. Thank you for your work, dedication, and commitment to young children birth to age 5 and their families in Iowa. Thank you also for this opportunity to discuss with you and other leaders in early childhood how to in-

crease and improve the programming and services provided to young children in Iowa.

Head Start's approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Assessment data from the 2013 Iowa Head Start Association Annual Report shows that close to 90 percent of 4-year-old Iowa Head Start children were proficient in the domains of language, literacy, and cognitive development prior to kindergarten.

Our country's top economists and researchers acknowledge that investments in high-quality early childhood development and learning programs, especially for low-income children, are the best education and economic investments we can make for the future of our Nation. By investing in early childhood and Early Head Start, you are investing in tomorrow's workforce.

Strategies for improving early childhood include, No. 1, increase the availability of and investment in evidence-based programs and practices which includes Head Start, Early Head Start; support efforts to attract, educate, and retain high-quality early childhood professionals; and, third, invest in Early Head Start services and programs to serve pregnant women and children birth to age 3.

High-quality early education has been proven to lead to less abuse and neglect, better performance in school, fewer high school dropouts, and, ultimately, fewer crimes committed and a reduction in the number of prisoners. The path we set children on in their earliest years can make a difference as they proceed through school and beyond.

We need efforts to support, educate, and retain high-quality early childhood professionals. Research clearly shows the importance of teacher retention and education for the successful growth and development for young children and the role that compensation plays in quality care. Educated teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree tend to have more positive interactions with children, have a greater sensitivity to their needs, and provide a richer linguistic experience.

If we want Iowa's children to be successful in becoming employable adults for the future workforce, we need to provide them a solid foundation from quality early childhood experiences with educated, high-quality early care and education providers. Expansion of Early Head Start will provide children and families access to high-quality early learning experiences that will support working families by providing a full-day, full-year program so that our vulnerable children have the healthy and enriching early experiences they need and parents have the opportunity to work and go to school to better their own lives and the lives of their families.

Expanding Early Head Start will provide comprehensive services that benefit children, families, and communities. By doing this, we will be providing more health, developmental and behavioral screenings; have higher health, safety, and nutrition standards; and increase parent engagement opportunities.

Collaborations and partnerships are crucial for the successful implementation of increasing high-quality early childhood programs. At Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, we have strong collaborations with both State and local stakeholders and depend on

them to assist in our successful operations delivery. Partnering with schools and other high-quality early childhood programs allows HACAP Head Start to serve as many children and families as possible in their own communities.

Successful partnerships take time to develop and form lasting relationships. Achievement of the goals and objectives of collaborative agreements requires commitment from all levels and persons involved in the program. Head Start expects commitment from our partners to the Head Start goals and compliance with the Head Start Act and all policies, regulations, and guidelines.

Head Start standards do not always align with our partners' policies and procedures. So together with our partners, they must be willing and able to invest in Head Start performance standards.

Senator Harkin, as a strong supporter of Head Start, you recognize and value Head Start as our Nation's premier provider of developmental and educational services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families who live in poverty and struggle to meet the basic needs of life. I assure you and our Federal, State, and local leaders that Head Start/Early Head Start will continue to play a key role in the transformation of education in America.

We will bring our long record of success in working with the most challenging young children and their families to our partnership with those in education and family services. Together, Iowa Head Start Association and the 19 Head Start/Early Head Start and migrant seasonal Head Start programs in Iowa will deliver on our Nation's promise that all of our young children and families have the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and attention, Senator Harkin.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Regan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTI REGAN

SUMMARY

Senator Tom Harkin, thank you for your work, dedication and commitment to young children and their families in Iowa.

Head Start is our Nation's premier provider of developmental and educational services to pregnant moms, infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families, who live in poverty and struggle to meet the basic needs of life. Head Start will continue to play a key role in the transformation of education in America. We will bring our long record of success in working with the most challenging young children and their families to our partnerships with those in education and family services. Together we will deliver on our Nation's promise that all of our young children have the opportunity to succeed.

Head Start is successful and is shown through performance and outcome measurements, staff professional qualifications, and initiatives that promote school readiness and parent family community engagement. Head Start is able to extend and serve families and communities through a variety of wraparound funding to provide full-day, full-year services. Head Start has established and is continually growing partnerships with local child care centers and public school to reach as many age- and income-eligible children and families.

The goals and priorities of Head Start and the Early Childhood field is to expand and provide more opportunities for infant/toddler care; funds to recruit and retain high quality childhood professionals with competitive compensation and investment in funding early childhood that provide comprehensive services to young children and their families. Healthy physical and social-emotional development is essential to success in school and life.

Thank you for your time and continued work to promote and build upon early childhood in Iowa for success in home, school, work and life.

Senator Harkin, thank you for your work, dedication and commitment to young children birth to age 5 and their families in Iowa. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you and other leaders in early childcare how to increase and improve the programming and services provided to the young children in Iowa. Iowa Head Start and early childcare partners are excited with the recent signing of the Omnibus Agreement and your work on Strong Start For America's Children Act that supports high quality early learning. The support and investment in Head Start Early Head Start and high quality early childhood programming, will restore sequestration reductions, provide more services for low-income children and invest in the future of young children.

As a supporter of Head Start you recognize and value Head Start as our Nation's premier provider of developmental and educational services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families, who live in poverty and struggle to meet the basic needs of life. Head Start will continue to play a key role in the transformation of education in America. We will bring our long record of success in working with the most challenging young children and their families to our partnerships with those in education and family services. Together Iowa Head Start will deliver on our Nation's promise that all of our young children have the opportunity to succeed.

Decades of research show that a high quality pre-kindergarten program experience has lasting effects, particularly for our most at-risk children. Together we must ensure that children birth to age 5 is provided accessible, intensive comprehensive services. Investing in Head Start, Early Head Start and early childhood programs expands on high quality early childhood programs.

Head Start Early Head Start provides comprehensive child development services for children ages birth to age 5. Through strong collaborations with agencies at the local and State level, the Iowa Head Start Association and the Iowa Head Start Collaboration Office, we contribute to the common vision for Iowa that every child is healthy and successful. Our comprehensive services ensure that Iowa children are receiving services that include health, dental care, mental health and nutrition; preschool education; parent support services; services for children with disabilities; and child care.

The mission of Iowa Head Start Association is to build the skills of its members to promote and advocate for a wide variety of quality services for all Iowa's children and families. Iowa Head Start Association supports, coordinates and develops Head Start communities across Iowa with the end goal of fulfilling the vision of a State in which all children have the opportunity to succeed. In Iowa, 14 Early Head Start, 18 Head Start and one Migrant and Seasonal Head Start grantee served 9,525 children and their families in the 2012-13 program year. Federal funding of about \$56 million supported these programs.

School readiness lies at the core of what Head Start is all about. Yet children who come from low-income families often start out behind their peers, a gap that occurs sometimes as young as 9 months of age. In the words of the Head Start Act of 2007, "The purpose of Head Start is to promote the school readiness of low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development." According to the national Office of Head Start,

"The Head Start approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning and schools are ready for children."

Office of Head Start regulations requires Head Start programs to create school readiness goals for all children in partnership with their parents. Assessment data shows that around 90 percent of 4-year-old Iowa Head Start children were proficient in significant domains such as language, literacy, and cognitive development prior to kindergarten.

In recent years, critics of Head Start have based their arguments on the Head Start Impact Study, which seemed to show a so-called fade out effect among Head Start students; that is, the gains made by children in Head Start disappear by third grade in relation to their non-Head Start peers. However, this is not the case in other legitimate and longitudinal measures which have shown sustained effects such as participating in special education, graduation rates, grade retention and overall academic success. And in a variety of measures, a consistent fade out effect was not found among subsets of the population (e.g., those who had 2 years of Head Start and those from higher risk backgrounds).

Families are central to the purpose of Head Start. Services address the unique needs of each family as well as the needs of their children. Head Start works with families based on the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework in seven key outcome areas: family well-being, parent-child relationships, families as

lifelong educators, families as learners, families involved in transitions to kindergarten, families connected to peers and community, and families as advocates and leaders. Every family shares the goal that they want what is best for their children, a goal that Head Start shares and works to achieve. By supporting parents and families, Head Start impacts those most responsible for the health and successful development of a child; his or her family. Parents who engage with Head Start have access to services that can make them healthier, better educated, and more prepared for parenthood. Head Start forges these partnerships with parents so that their children may develop well and gain a good foundation for the rest of their lives.

There are approximately 2,000 days between birth and the first day of kindergarten. Research proves that the first 2,000 days of a child's life can have a profound and lifelong impact on physical and emotional well-being, readiness to learn and succeed, and ability to become a productive employee and citizen. By investing in early childhood, you are investing in tomorrow's workforce. Business leaders report that many employees are not equipped with the skills and attitudes they need to be successful. Research tells us that the foundation for these skills begins in the first 2,000 days of life.

Strategies for investing in the foundation of tomorrow's workforce include:

- A. Increase availability of, and investment in, evidence-based programs and practices.
 - a. Family support and home visitation.
 - b. Quality early learning programs for low-income and high-needs children.
 - c. Promote healthy physical and social/emotional development.
- B. Support efforts to attract, educate and retain high-quality early childhood professionals.
- C. Invest in Early Head Start services and programs to serve pregnant women and children birth to age 3.

Investing in high-quality early childhood education is the soundest step to support our young children. Strong Start for America's Children Act provides young children with the strong start they need to be successful in school and life. Our country's top economists and researchers acknowledge investments in high quality early childhood development and learning programs, especially for low-income children, are the best education and economic investment we can make for the future of our Nation.

High quality early education has been proven to lead to less abuse and neglect, better performance in school, fewer high school drop-outs and ultimately, fewer crimes committed and a reduction in the number of prisoners. The path we set children on in their earliest years can make a difference as they proceed through school and beyond.

Head Start employs high quality staff to serve the children and families with whom they work. Compensation, education and retention are the three most important factors in the quality of the early childhood workforce. Compensating teachers better increases morale and decreases turnover. Educated workers are better prepared and more skillful in all industries, early childhood included. And, having consistent teachers is beneficial to any child's development.

We need efforts to support, attract, educate and retain high-quality early childhood professionals. Research clearly shows the importance of teacher retention and education for the successful growth and development for young children and the role that compensation plays in quality care. Inadequate compensation has been shown to be a strong predictor of turnover. Educated teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree tend to have more positive interactions with children, have greater sensitivity to their needs and provide richer linguistic experiences. If we want Iowa's children to be successful in becoming employable adults for the future workforce, they need a solid foundation from quality early childhood experiences with educated, high quality early care and education providers. "Substantial investments in training, recruiting, compensating and retaining a high quality workforce must be a top priority for society." The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Early Head Start only serves about 4 percent of eligible children. Expansion of Early Head Start will provide children and families access to high-quality early learning experiences that support working families by providing a full-day, full-year program so that vulnerable children have the healthy and enriching early experiences they need and parents have the opportunity to work/go to school to better their own life and the life of their family.

Expanding Early Head Start will provide comprehensive services that benefit children, families and communities by providing health, developmental and behavioral screenings; higher health, safety and nutrition standards; increased professional development opportunities for teachers and increased parent engagement opportunities.

Collaborations and partnerships are crucial for the successful implementation of increasing high-quality early childhood programs. Head Start relies on a variety of partnerships to support our delivery system. At Hawkeye Area Community Action Program Head Start we have strong collaborations with State and local stakeholders and depend on them to assist in our successful operations delivery. Working together, we have a common goal to ensure the healthy growth and development of young children in the context of their families.

State stakeholders provide wraparound funding that allows Head Start to provide full-day, full-year services for working/going to school parents and families. A collaborative and comprehensive partnership brings integration of an early care, health and education system in Iowa to improve the outcomes of young children. Shared Visions funding (Iowa Department Education) allows children to be enrolled in a full-day program and parents are able to work and/or go to school knowing their child is enrolled in a high-quality program. Iowa Department of Education is able to include essential data to measure growth and development of enrolled children in the State of Iowa. Program performance measures the success of a program and the activity and growth of the population served. By partnering with Head Start, the Iowa Department of Education is able to collect and report statewide indicator data to quantify and track progress toward statewide results.

Local partnerships with public schools, early childhood programs and funding sources also provide wraparound services. Partnering with schools and other high-quality early childhood programs allows Head Start to serve as many age- and income-eligible children and families as possible in their communities. The partnerships allow Head Start to expand into rural communities where otherwise families would not be able to receive the services. Head Start children are served in the same classroom as the school or early childhood program's enrolled children. The local partner provides the teacher, space and supervision of the employees. Head Start provides health services and family services and financially supports the Head Start enrolled children. In many cases children are provided a full-day preschool classroom through the blending of Federal Head Start dollars and local dollars. More time at school and more time in appropriate instruction produce results reflecting developmental gains. Families and children are able to make smoother transitions from Head Start to public school. Together partners and Head Start are meeting the needs of children and families.

Successful partnerships take time to develop and form lasting relationships. Achievement of the goals and objectives of collaborative agreements requires commitment from all levels and persons involved in the program. Policies, regulations and guidelines contribute to the effective and efficient process necessary goal attainment. Head Start expects commitment to the Head Start goals, and compliance with the Head Start Act and all policies and regulations, and guidelines of the Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families. Head Start Standards do not always align with partner's policies and procedures, so our partners must be willing and able to invest in Head Start Performance Standards.

Why do we need Head Start and other high-quality early childhood programs?

A. Invest now, benefit later—high quality early childhood care, education and family services pay off in a myriad of benefits to children, their families and society as a whole.

B. Comprehensive programs—research demonstrates that academic readiness and social/emotional development all affect a child's readiness for school.

C. Research shows first years critical—research shows that children's experiences have a dramatic effect on how they approach life in later years.

D. Patterns form early—brain research indicates that 90 percent of the brain develops by age 3, and concepts of compassion, conscience and personal responsibility are established by age 4.

Without Head Start Early Head Start and other high-quality early childhood programs, low-income children would miss the opportunity to learn and grow in preschool and would be at a greater risk for academic and social difficulties later in life.

Senator Harkin, thank you for your efforts and we look forward to working with you and our Federal leaders on the implementation of Strong Start for America's Children Act to improve early learning opportunities for children birth to age 5.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Christi, and for coming all the way over from Cedar Rapids.

Gabriela Gallentine runs an interesting early education center that I've got to go see.

Welcome and please proceed.

STATEMENT OF GABRIELA GALLENTINE, DIRECTOR OF HISPANIC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, CONMIGO EARLY EDUCATION CENTER, DES MOINES, IA

Ms. GALLENTINE. Good morning, and thank you, Senator Harkin. Thank you for this opportunity, and I thank you for your work related to early childhood. I'm Gabriela Gallentine, the executive director of Hispanic Educational Resources and the director of Connmigo Early Education Center here in Des Moines, IA. I thank you for this opportunity to share my program with you and how we support children from low-income families to ensure kindergarten readiness.

Our agency provides educational programming for children and families, with a tradition of serving the needs of the Latino community in the Des Moines area. Our primary program is focused on early learning, and it's called Connmigo Early Ed. We provide high-quality bilingual early childhood experiences for children ages 2 to 5. Our mission is to position children to thrive in school, community, and life.

Our Connmigo program is a full-day program, which is 11 hours a day Monday through Friday and a year-round program as well. We serve an average of about 120 families living in 15 different zip codes in the Des Moines area. This program has been in existence for 18 years and is State licensed. Typically, about 89 percent of our families qualify for child care assistance through Iowa Department of Human Services, and 88 percent of our students speak Spanish as the primary language in the home.

Our efforts include parent involvement, as we do require parents to participate in conferences twice each year, parent meetings, family literacy events—all of these to learn the necessary skills to support their child's emerging literacy skills. Connmigo currently participates in Iowa's Quality Rating System and has reached the highest level of quality, earning five stars this year. Yet we will continue to seek ways to improve the service that we provide to these children.

Our teachers are required to complete professional development training. Half of our teachers have completed either a CDA or have a bachelor's degree in early childhood. Funding from programs such as T.E.A.C.H. scholarships through IAEYC has helped our teachers meet those professional development goals. We also participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program to offer quality, nutritious meals, with support also from Iowa State University Extension to provide access to nutrition education for our families.

Our center is part of the United Way of Central Iowa Childhood Coalition and benefits from many supports from United Way of Central Iowa and Women's Leadership, in particular. Some of those supports include the ability to provide developmental screenings for all of our children enrolled, screenings such as lead, dental, and vision screenings. We're also able to provide consultations with developmental therapists from Orchard Place and Children's Therapy Services. We also are able to offer consultations and receive the services of a child care consultant from Visiting Nurses Services.

The children in our center benefit from the use of a research-based Creative Curriculum in the classrooms, and we monitor and assess progress using Creative Curriculum's Gold Assessment. This is the same assessment piece that is used by Des Moines Public Schools. Connigo also partners with Des Moines Public Schools to offer universal pre-Kindergarten at our center, and we share our student assessment data with Des Moines Public Schools and Early Childhood Iowa.

Our program addresses the needs of dual language learners by collecting home language surveys when children are enrolled and providing all written materials for parents in both English and Spanish whenever possible. We provide vocabulary development in English and Spanish for students, allowing them to transition gradually to mostly English in the universal pre-K classroom.

Parents are provided with consultations as needed or determined by teachers as well as requested by the parent. Translation services are always provided if they are needed. Some children in our program require special language supports, which are provided on-site. In addition, we see some language needs specific to our program because of the difference in the language spoken in the home and the possible lack of English support for those students in their homes. These issues require specialized training for our teachers, and consistent attendance is a must for these students as well.

Quality early childhood provides opportunities for the child to develop the necessary phonemic awareness to make sense of their second language. Phonemic awareness is an essential skill to connect sounds of words to written text. This is a prerequisite skill for reading. This is especially important for the population that we serve, because most of our children—like I said, better than 70 percent—do not have an English language model at home to provide support for them.

The developmental screening that we provide for our children also helps us to determine if there are other issues that the child may be dealing with. There may be speech delays, fine or gross motor development delays. There may be behavioral or social-emotional delays that need to be addressed. The child may have had an adverse childhood experience, or the whole family may have been dealing with a traumatic event.

In addition, the majority of these students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As Senator Quirmbach indicated, many of these children have several disadvantages even before they start school. So a quality early learning program is essential for them, in particular.

I'd like to talk to you a little bit about phonemic awareness and why that's important to children who are learning English. Phonemic awareness primes children in preparation for reading. This is particularly important for them, especially those children in our population at our center, because they don't have a model at home.

These children also are not hearing the kind of language they need to develop those sounds or phonemes required in the English language. They're not developing the auditory skills to distinguish English sound fragments or patterns in words. These phonemes are not necessarily the same in Spanish or perhaps any other lan-

guage. These phonemes are not inherently obvious, and these have to be taught.

So when our children are coming to us in increasing numbers and do not have a background in English, do not have a model at home, their needs are particularly high for a quality early learning experience. Phonemic awareness is a strong indicator, a strong predictor of children who will experience early reading success.

A quality early childhood program exposes children to phonemic awareness, music, rhymes, poems, and language patterns that they are going to need to make sense of their second language. Students have to grasp this concept before they can make the connection to written text or reading.

Delivered introduction of vocabulary and speech and language services are critical for children at this age. Therefore, it is my recommendation to this committee that children of low socio-economic backgrounds or dual language learners have access to quality early childhood or preschool experiences that include these supports.

Other issues that we see in my particular center are the matters of attendance and eligibility. Those are directly tied, because many of our families rely on support from Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance. The support that they receive is typically a 6-month contract, although we are seeing variations to those contracts, which may be anywhere between 3 weeks to 6 months.

At times, parents can see a gap in their coverage, and they are faced with a dilemma. Will they pay a full rate, a private pay rate, for their child to continue their education until their contract is renewed, or will they have to pull their child out because they're not able to pay that rate?

We're seeing issues in attendance with children. Attendance is critical for these children that are learning English because they need to build on those skills on a day-to-day basis. I implore you, please consider funding for child care assistance that takes into account the needs of the child.

A year-long contract would be most beneficial for a child and, obviously, for the families, because it's a challenge for them in many ways when they see those gaps. For us, being able to provide services throughout the day, an 11-hour program is essentially very useful for them.

Being able to provide those supports for their children, whether it's speech therapy, occupational therapy, or having a consultant from Children's Therapy Services come in to work with their child onsite, is very important and very beneficial for these families because they're not able to take the time off work to go pick up the child, take them to therapy, take them back to the center, back to work—that's quite a dilemma for a family to face. And very often, they have to forego those benefits for their child.

We are fortunate to be able to offer that onsite. And I highly recommend that you please consider that as a necessary component for high-quality programs.

I invite you and any other members from the committee, as well as any of our distinguished guests, to visit Conmigo Early Ed. I also invite you, Senator, if you would like, to use our center as a venue for making announcements or getting in touch and commu-

nicating with the Latino community. I'd be happy to welcome you there.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gallentine follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GABRIELA GALLENTINE

SUMMARY

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and members of the committee. I am Gabriela Gallentine, executive director of Hispanic Educational Resources and director of Connigo Early Education Center in Des Moines, IA. I thank you for the opportunity to share my program with you and how we support children and families from low-income to moderate-income to ensure kindergarten readiness.

Our agency provides educational programming for children and families with a tradition of serving the needs of the Latino Community in the Des Moines area. Our primary program is focused on early learning and is called Connigo Early Education Center where we provide a high quality, bilingual early childhood learning experience for children ages 2–5. Our mission: We are a premier Latino early childhood learning center specializing in bilingual, culturally affirming educational programming and experiences for children and families. We position children to thrive in school, community, and life. Our Connigo program is a full-day program open to the public regardless of primary language and we serve 120 families living in 15 different zip codes in the Des Moines area per year. This program has been in existence for 18 years and is a State-licensed child care center. Typically, 89 percent of our families qualify for Child Care Assistance funding through Iowa Department of Human Services, 88 percent speak Spanish as the primary language in the home. Our efforts include parent involvement as we require parents to participate in conferences twice each year, parent meetings and Family Literacy Events to learn the skills that support their child's emerging literacy skills.

Connigo currently participates in Iowa's Quality Rating System and has reached the highest level of quality earning 5 stars this year yet we will continue to seek ways to improve the service we provide. Our teachers are required to complete professional development trainings and half of our teachers have completed either a CDA or have a bachelor's degree in early childhood. Funding from T.E.A.C.H. scholarships through IAIEYC have helped our teachers meet professional development goals. We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program to offer quality, nutritious meals and with Iowa State University Extension to provide access to nutrition education for our families. Our center is part of the United Way of Central Iowa Early Childhood Coalition and benefits from many supports or comprehensive services for our children and families. Some of those supports include a developmental screening for every child enrolled, lead, dental, and vision screenings as well as consultations with developmental therapists from Orchard Place or Children's Therapy Services to address any possible behavioral or developmental delays. The children in our center benefit from the use of the research-based Creative Curriculum in the classrooms and we monitor and assess progress using Creative Curriculum's Gold Assessment. Connigo also partners with Des Moines Public Schools to offer Universal Pre-Kindergarten at our center. We share our student assessment data with Des Moines Public Schools and Early Childhood Iowa.

Our program addresses the needs of dual language learners by collecting a Home Language Survey when children are enrolled and providing all written materials for parents in both English and Spanish whenever possible. We provide vocabulary development in English and Spanish for students allowing them to transition gradually to mostly English in the UPK class. Parents are provided with consultations as needed or determined by the teacher or requested by the parent and translation services are always provided if needed. Some children in our program require special language supports which are provided onsite. In addition, we see language needs specific to our program because of the difference in the language spoken in the home and the possible lack of English support for our students in their homes. These issues require specialized training for our teachers and consistent attendance is a must for our students.

Quality early childhood provides opportunities for the child to develop the necessary phonemic awareness to make sense of their 2d oral language. Phonemic awareness is an essential skill to connect sounds of words with written text. This is a pre-requisite skill for reading.

Consistent attendance can be a challenge for some of our families because of changes in their Child Care Assistance funding or lapses in coverage. This can be problematic for a child's progress in kindergarten readiness when their family can-

not ensure regular attendance. Providing parents with access to quality early childhood programs and funding support that takes into consideration the learning needs of young children is a great need in our community and State.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage members of this committee to continue to seek out alternatives to address the learning needs of our youngest and most vulnerable population. The investment and efforts we make in early childhood have long-term implications. I have had the pleasure of meeting several "graduates" of our agency's early childhood program and I am pleased to hear the stories from their parents of how well their child performed in school following their experience in our preschool and gave me details about their high grades or scholarships to Iowa's colleges or universities. These are the kinds of success stories that we foster in a quality early childhood setting.

Thank you all for your efforts on behalf of Iowa's children and all children in this country. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and members of the committee. I am Gabriela Gallentine, executive director of Hispanic Educational Resources and director of Connmigo Early Education Center in Des Moines, IA. I thank you for the opportunity to share my program with you and how we support children and families from low-income to moderate-income to ensure kindergarten readiness.

HER & CONMIGO BACKGROUND

Hispanic Educational Resources, Inc. (HER) is a well-respected, non-profit leader in bi-lingual education providing resources and educational programming that encompasses the entire family unit. We strive to position Latino families for life-long success. HER is derived from the first nonprofit Latino community center in Des Moines originally named the United Mexican-American Community Center (UMACC). The UMAC Center was founded in 1983 by a small, dedicated group of Mexican-American families and community leaders. These founders worked steadily to build support even re-financing their homes to raise the funds to purchase the building on Scott Avenue. The goal of these founders was to create a community center that focused on the needs and interests specific to the Latino community and maintaining the culture and language of the Latino community. The UMAC Center achieved 501(c)3 status late in 1983. In 1999 the center changed its name to Hispanic Educational Resources, Inc. (HER) in response to becoming a more diverse and inclusive community center representing several Latino cultures and languages. The governance of HER is provided by a volunteer board of directors representing a variety of sectors of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic community.

HER PROGRAMS

Our programming includes Connmigo Early Education Center, a child care/preschool, the Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) for school-age children, adult literacy classes offered in the Plaza Comunitaria, and Family Development through Family Literacy Events, informational workshops or classes for parents as well as community outreach and case management. The services are available to anyone in the Des Moines community to fulfill our agency's mission:

Empowering Our Community Through Quality Education and Advocacy

HER also serves as a community resource by hosting the Mexican Consulate and informational meetings open to the general public (example topics have included: Immigrants' Rights, Gambling Abatement Resources, Lions Club Membership and Benefits, and Conversational English for adults). HER has also partnered with Visiting Nurses Services to provide H1N1 Vaccine Clinics and Child Safety Seat Installation, Iowa State University to provide a Health and Nutrition classes for adults as well as United Healthcare for an informational meeting for seniors regarding Medicare Options. HER and Connmigo also participate in two community events throughout the year by providing children's activities for the Des Moines Arts Festival in June and the Latino Heritage Festival in September. HER also serves as a host site for the Metro Arts Alliance Jazz in July Series providing a family friendly festival-type event including live music, cultural dance groups, ethnic food vendors and children's activities supervised by our skilled teachers.

CONMIGO PROGRAM HISTORY: (FORMERLY XOCHIPILLI CHILDREN'S CENTER)

Connmigo Early Education Center is an early childhood learning center specializing in bilingual, culturally affirming educational programming and experiences for

children and families. In 1995, Hispanic Educational Resources, Inc. received funding via the Community Development Block Grant to make necessary structural modifications that would accommodate the needs of our new center. A "Community Needs Assessment" was completed and a strategic plan was constructed to make our center a reality. In October 1995 the Children's Center was opened by utilizing grant moneys from the Department of Education. Finally, in 1997 the center was officially named "Xochipilli"; a Mayan word meaning "A garden where the children flourish." The center's name was officially changed to "Connmigo Early Education Center" on July 1, 2011 as part of a business improvement grant from First Children's Finance that also provided the new signs visible on the property today. The word "connmigo" means "with me" in Spanish and was chosen because the term demonstrates the cultural approach of an inclusive family setting we offer. It was also chosen to represent the diverse population of children and families we serve.

Our mission: We are a premier Latino early childhood learning center specializing in bilingual, culturally affirming educational programming and experiences for children and families. We position children to thrive in school, community, and life.

Our Vision: Our vision is to be leaders in and for our community by promoting success through learning and achievement.

Our Connmigo program is a full-day program open to the public regardless of primary language and we serve 140 families living in 15 different zip codes in the Des Moines area per year. This program has been in existence for 18 years and is a state-licensed child care center.

Connmigo currently participates in Iowa's Quality Rating System and has reached the highest level of quality earning 5 stars this year, yet we will continue to seek ways to improve the service we provide.

Our teachers are required to complete professional development trainings and half of our teachers have completed either a Child Development Associate or have a bachelor's degree in early childhood. The rest of our teachers are making progress toward completion of the Child Development Associate credential. Funding from T.E.A.C.H. scholarships through IAEEYC have been an incredible opportunity that has helped our teachers meet professional development goals.

Our center is part of the United Way of Central Iowa Early Childhood Coalition and benefits from many supports or comprehensive services for our children and families. Some of those supports include a developmental screening for every child enrolled, lead, dental, and vision screenings as well as consultations with developmental therapists from Orchard Place or Children's Therapy Services to address any possible behavioral or developmental delays. The children in our center benefit from the use of the research-based Creative Curriculum in the classrooms and we monitor and assess progress using Creative Curriculum's Gold Assessment. Connmigo also partners with Des Moines Public Schools to offer universal pre-kindergarten at our center. We share our student assessment data with Des Moines Public Schools and Early Childhood Iowa. We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program to offer quality, nutritious meals and with Iowa State University Extension to provide access to nutrition education for our families.

Our program addresses the needs of dual language learners by collecting a Home Language Survey when children are enrolled. We also provide all written materials for parents in both English and Spanish whenever possible. We provide vocabulary development in English and Spanish for students allowing them to transition gradually to mostly English in the UPK class. All our assessment of kindergarten readiness is completed in English. Our students also benefit from the United Way Book Buddy program where volunteers come in twice a week to read to our 4- and 5-year-old students. Book Buddy volunteers are trained by Des Moines Public School specialists in reading readiness and the focus of the program is to develop those basic concepts about print. We collect pre-test and post-test data on our students to evaluate effectiveness and plan for further training each year. Parents are provided with consultations, as needed or determined by the teacher or requested by the parent, and translation services are always provided if needed. Our efforts include parent involvement as we require parents to participate in conferences twice each year, parent meetings and Family Literacy Events to learn the skills that support their child's emerging literacy skills.

DEMOGRAPHICS

We serve an average of 120 children per year ages 2-5 and an additional 50 children ages 6-10.

The average family income for our families is \$20,000 per year.

The average family size 4.6 and 92 percent of families being 2-parent households.

Eighty-three percent of our children served qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch Program and Child Care Assistance funding through the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.

Ninety-two percent White-Hispanic.

Five percent White-Non-Hispanic.

Three percent African-American.

Eighty-eight percent speak Spanish as the primary language in the home.

Ninety-six percent of the children were born in Iowa while four percent were born in other U.S. States.

POSSIBLE SPECIAL NEEDS OF CONMIGO STUDENTS

Most students in our program are learning English as their second language, there may be speech delays, or delays in fine and gross motor development. There may be behavioral or social-emotional developmental delays. The child may have had an adverse childhood experience or the whole family may be dealing with a traumatic event. Finally, the majority of our students come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

A developmental screening is completed for all children. Of those screened, 11 percent are referred for additional screening or evaluation. Approximately 9 percent of students will qualify for additional services like speech therapy, occupational therapy or behavior modification supports. Our students receive these services onsite. Not only is this convenient for parents but is extremely effective in addressing learning or developmental needs on a consistent basis. Students are able to progress rapidly through therapies and exit out parallel to their peers who did not receive such therapies. HER has a Family Development Coordinator who works with providers, family, and insurance to ensure children have access to those supports.

The Connmigo director ensures a comprehensive, collaborative process is followed to identify, discuss and establish a plan of action for each child that includes teachers, parents, specialists and the Family Development Coordinator. Information and forms are provided in English and Spanish as much as possible for parents/guardians. Ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reports are provided to the parents to reinforce the need for them to remain actively involved in their child's education. Based on the results of our CC Gold Assessment data I highly recommend this approach as our data demonstrates that students are able to make substantial progress when those needs are addressed at the age of 2, 3 or 4.

WHY ARE THESE SUPPORTS NECESSARY?

Phonemic awareness is essential to learning to speak English and to read English for our population of students. English Language Learners are disadvantaged because they may not have an English language model at home. At Connmigo, 70 percent of our students have little or no English support in their home. These children are not hearing the kind of language needed to develop the sounds/phonemes required in the English language. They are not developing the auditory skills to distinguish English sound fragments or patterns in words. Phonemes produced in English are not necessarily the same in Spanish. For example, the word "brisa" in Spanish: b-r-i-s-a is the word "breeze" in English but the way the phoneme for "r" is not produced the same as b-r-ee-ze. Some phonemes in English do not exist in Spanish. For example, the word "thing" has the digraph/phoneme "th" at the beginning and the digraph/phoneme "ng" at the end. Neither of these exists in Spanish. In addition, the one to one correspondence of letters to sounds isn't necessarily consistent in English which presents a challenge to learners of English.

A quality early childhood program exposes children to the phonemic awareness, music, rhymes, poems, and language patterns needed to make sense of their 2d oral language. Students have to grasp this concept before they can make the connection to written text or reading. Deliberate introduction of vocabulary and speech and language services are critical for young children learning English for all of these reasons. Therefore, it is my recommendation to this committee that children of low socio-economic background or dual language learners have access to a quality early childhood or preschool experience that includes these supports.

ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE AND PRESCHOOL

All the services provided at HER and Connmigo are family-centered. We coordinate with other community service providers to help parents access supports. Child Care Assistance Funding is critical to families of low socio-economic background. Families need this funding to maintain a job and steady employment is a way of achieving financial stability for their families. The challenge for many families is the short-term contracts of funding provided for their children. Some families receive funding

for small segments of time ranging from 2 weeks to 6 months. Some parents have lost their funding because of the course of study they are involved in. One example was a parent who had to complete a field practicum to complete her nursing certificate. Because she was not employed during this time she was disqualified for assistance despite the fact that her practicum required her to work in a nursing setting full-time. Another example was a parent finishing his bachelor's degree in elementary education. His funding was canceled because he was not employed during his final term that he had to complete his student teaching. This issue contributes directly to the variation in our enrollment throughout the year as parents typically pull their child out of the center during those times that they do not have funding. This is not conducive to consistent development of the child's emerging literacy skills and can be very unsettling to a young child whose brain development and psyche are in need of consistency at this time in their lives. Children frequently demonstrate regressive behavior, separation anxiety and difficulty making appropriate choices. One child's stressful behavior potentially affects other children in the class as well. It is my recommendation to this committee that child care assistance be provided on an annual basis to take into consideration the learning needs of the child. Children in our program who maintain enrollment demonstrate more consistent rates of progress according to our CC Gold assessment data while those whose attendance is inconsistent may plateau for months at a time rendering the child at-risk for not meeting age-appropriate expectations or kindergarten readiness according to the evaluation tool.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to encourage members of this committee to continue to seek out alternatives to address the learning needs of our youngest and most vulnerable population. The investment and efforts we make in early childhood have long-term implications. I have had the pleasure of meeting several "graduates" of our agency's early childhood program and I am pleased to hear the stories from their parents of how well their child performed in school following their experience in our preschool and gave me details about their high grades or scholarships to Iowa's colleges or universities. It was exciting to have met a young woman last October during a volunteer event for United Way and discovered that she graduated from our preschool. She recalled being a student at our center and recognized a photo of her teacher who is still teaching with us. She exclaimed "Esta es mi escuelita!" and translated immediately for the rest of the group "This was my school!" She also shared with me that she loved school from the moment she started school with us and had completed a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University. It was rewarding to meet a person whose life was an example of our mission: to position children to thrive in school, community and life. These are the kinds of success stories that we foster in a quality early childhood setting.

I welcome you, Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander and members of the committee to visit Connigo Early Education Center to witness our family-centered approach to building reading readiness in young children. I will gladly work with your staff to coordinate the visit. I welcome you as well Chairman Harkin to use HER as a venue to make any announcements or to connect to the Latino Community of central Iowa.

Thank you all for your efforts on behalf of Iowa's children and all children in this country. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

The CHAIRMAN. I'll take you up on it. Thank you very much, Gabriela.

General Pierce, welcome. Tell us about Mission: Readiness.

STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS M. PIERCE, BRIGADIER GENERAL, U.S. AIR FORCE (RETIRED), MISSION: READINESS, NORWALK, IA

General PIERCE. Thank you, Senator Harkin. People may wonder what a retired Air Force General is doing at a hearing on early childhood education. But the reality is that how we prepare our youngest kids to learn and succeed in school has a profound impact on our military readiness.

The alarming fact is that an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 cannot qualify for mili-

tary service. People are shocked when they hear this, and they should be. It means that the vast majority of our young people are losing out on the opportunity to serve this country. It also means that our Nation could be in jeopardy when it comes to military readiness.

We tend to think about our military today in terms of fast jets, powerful ships, smart weapons, and tanks. But the most powerful tool for our armed forces is still our people, our women and men in uniform. The more than 400 retired admirals and generals of the national security organization, Mission: Readiness, are focused on how to grow the pool of eligible recruits.

There are three key barriers to enlistment that comprise this 75 percent figure. Our young adults are either unprepared academically because they lack a high school degree or can't pass the military's entrance exam, they are too overweight to handle the physical tasks that the military service demands, or they have a serious criminal record.

What is especially startling is that many of those who do earn a high school diploma and try to join the military are both disappointed and surprised to learn that they do not have the literacy, math, and problem solving skills we require. These academic deficits have a direct impact on the Nation's military readiness. In Iowa, 12 percent of all high school students do not graduate on time, and 19 percent of those who do graduate and try to join the Army cannot score high enough on the military's exam for math, literacy, and problem solving to be able to enlist.

Fortunately, we know from research that high-quality pre-K can improve student performance, boost graduation rates, deter youth from crime, and even help reduce obesity. Mission: Readiness has often cited two long-term studies to make our case for high-quality pre-K, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program and the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan. But we are very excited about new research that shows that high-quality programs, like those in New Jersey, can successfully be brought to scale through State pre-K programs.

The members of Mission: Readiness are in good company when it comes to recognizing the value of high-quality pre-K. Parents around the Nation try their best to make it available for their children. Educators around the Nation point to their own personal experiences with children who have benefited from it. Policymakers around the Nation from both sides of the aisle are making strong commitments to it. And a growing coalition of leaders from the military, law enforcement, business, and faith communities have joined those in support of high-quality pre-K.

These moves come at a pivotal time for pre-K in America. Right now, more than half of our States serve 30 percent or fewer of their 4-year-olds. We need public investments from State and Federal sources to help families afford pre-K. States like Iowa have been shouldering that burden alone and making progress. But it's such an issue of national interest that it needs to be a State and Federal priority.

Fortunately, help is at hand. The Strong Start for America's Children Act introduced by Senator Harkin would create and fund the State-Federal partnership that would enable States across the

country to provide high-quality pre-K for 4-year-olds from every low- and moderate-income family in the Nation.

This legislation can help address all three of the major barriers to enlistment that the military faces. This legislation could put more children in Iowa on the path to high school graduation and the college and career opportunities that become available because of that, including the military if they so choose.

It will reduce crime rates and the number of kids being convicted of felonies or serious misdemeanors, which are disqualification for military service. Senator Harkin's bill also puts an emphasis on pre-K programs, including nutrition services and education, physical activity, and obesity prevention programs. Getting our kids on the right path when it comes to their health and wellness will also ensure our potential recruits are physically fit to serve.

Next fall, our recruiting class of 2028 either will or will not start a quality early education program. The decisions we make today have a profound impact on our ability to continue to staff an increasingly technological all-volunteer military down the road.

That's why military leaders are standing beside policymakers who are acting in a bold and bipartisan manner to ensure that every child has a fair chance to succeed at whatever they choose in life. That's what this important preschool legislation will do, and our national security depends on it.

Thank you, Senator Harkin.

[The prepared statement of General Pierce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS M. PIERCE

SUMMARY

You may wonder what a retired Air Force general is doing at a hearing that is focused on early childhood education, but the reality is that how we prepare our youngest kids to learn and succeed in school has a profound impact on our military readiness.

The alarming fact is that an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 cannot qualify for military service. This is primarily due to three key barriers to enlistment: our young adults are either unprepared academically—because they lack a high school degree or can't pass the military's entrance exam; they are too overweight to handle the physical tasks that military service demands; or they have a serious criminal record. This means that the vast majority of our young people are losing out on the opportunity to serve their country.

It also means our Nation could be in jeopardy when it comes to military readiness. We tend to think about our military today in terms of fast jets, powerful ships, smart weapons and tanks, but the most powerful tool for our armed forces is still our people—our women and men in uniform. The more than 400 retired admirals and generals of the national security organization Mission: Readiness are focused on how to grow the pool of eligible recruits.

Mission: Readiness has often cited two long-term studies to make our case for high quality pre-K—the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program and the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan. But, we are very excited about new research that shows that high quality programs, like those in New Jersey, can successfully be brought to scale through State pre-K programs.

The members of Mission: Readiness are in good company when it comes to recognizing the value of high quality pre-K, as a growing coalition of leaders from law enforcement, business, and faith communities have expressed support for high quality pre-K. They join parents and educators from across the Nation, and policymakers from both sides of the aisle, in making strong commitments to early education.

Next fall, our recruiting class of 2028 either will or will not start a quality early education program. The decisions we make today have a profound impact on our ability to continue to staff an increasingly technological, all-volunteer military down the road. That's why military leaders are standing beside policymakers who are act-

ing in a bold and bipartisan manner to ensure that every child has a fair chance to succeed at whatever they choose in life. That's what this important pre-K legislation will do—and our national security depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, and Related Agencies: You may wonder what a retired Air Force general is doing at a hearing that is focused on early childhood education, but the reality is that how we prepare our youngest kids to learn and succeed in school has a profound impact on our military readiness.

The alarming fact is that an estimated 75 percent of all young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 *cannot* qualify for military service. People are shocked when they hear this—and they should be. It means that the vast majority of our young people are losing out on the opportunity to serve their country.

It also means our Nation could be in jeopardy when it comes to military readiness. We tend to think about our military today in terms of fast jets, powerful ships, smart weapons and tanks, but the most powerful tool for our armed forces is still our people—our women and men in uniform. The more than 400 retired admirals and generals of the national security organization Mission: Readiness are focused on how to grow the pool of eligible recruits.

There are three key barriers to enlistment that comprise that 75 percent figure: Our young adults are either unprepared academically—because they lack a high school degree or can't pass the military's entrance exam; they are too overweight to handle the physical tasks that military service demands; or they have a serious criminal record.

What is especially startling is that many of those who do earn a high school diploma and try to join the military are both disappointed and surprised to learn that they do not have the literacy, math and problem solving skills we require. These academic deficits have a direct impact on the Nation's military readiness.

In Iowa, 12 percent of all high school students do not graduate on time and 19 percent of those who do graduate and try to join the Army cannot score highly enough on the military's exam for math, literacy and problem solving to be able to enlist.

Fortunately, we know from the research that high quality preschool can improve student performance, boost graduation rates, deter youth from crime, and even help reduce weight gain.

Mission: Readiness has often cited two long-term studies to make our case for high quality pre-K.

These studies—which focused on the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program and the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan—followed the participants for decades and found that the experience significantly boosted high school graduation and success in the workforce while reducing involvement in crime.

But, we are very excited about new research that shows that high quality programs can successfully be brought to scale through State pre-K programs. This research also refutes the argument that the academic gains of pre-school are destined to “fade-out” as children move on through elementary school.

In fact, by the 4th or 5th grade, those who attended high quality pre-K in New Jersey were three-quarters of an academic year ahead in math and two-thirds of an academic year ahead in literacy compared to those who did not attend.

They were also 40 percent less likely to be held back in school and 31 percent less likely to need special education services.

Our research also documents outstanding results from other States, including Arkansas, Michigan, New Mexico, and West Virginia. These results ranged from gains in literacy and math to reductions in the number of children who are held back in school, to reductions in the number who became involved in crime in later years.

With all this in mind, it is easy to see why parents across the country want to get their children into high quality pre-school programs. Unfortunately for many, high quality pre-K is as out of reach as college tuition. Early learning programs that meet high-quality benchmarks costs an average of \$9,000 per child, per year, depending on the State. That can be as much as in-State tuition at public universities, which is way beyond what many working families can afford for their preschoolers.

Here in Iowa, our State pre-K programs served 52 percent of the State's 4-year-olds in 2012. Unlike most States, State per-child funding for preschool in Iowa increased slightly in 2011–12. We must continue this trend and increase the number of children served by high-quality early education programs in Iowa.

This is important not only for the children who need quality pre-K—but also for the children who are already in quality pre-K programs.

Why? Because elementary school teachers tell us time and again that all children in a classroom are affected when just a few children in that classroom are not ready to learn when they start school. The behavioral problems and other issues they face affect the teacher's ability to give all children the attention they need.

The members of Mission: Readiness are in good company when it comes to recognizing the value of high quality pre-K:

Parents around the Nation try their best to make it available for their children.

Educators around the Nation point to their own personal experiences with children who have benefited from it.

Policymakers around the Nation—from both sides of the aisle—are making strong commitments to it.

And a growing coalition of leaders from the military, law enforcement, business, and faith communities have joined those in support of high quality pre-K.

These moves come at a pivotal time for pre-K in America. In 2012, more than half of our States serve 30 percent or fewer of their 4-year-olds. Another 10 States have do not even have State pre-school programs.

And while policymakers, educators and parents in many States would love to see quality pre-K offered to more children, virtually all face financial challenges that are making that very difficult.

We need public investments, from State and Federal sources, to help families afford pre-K. States like Iowa have been shouldering that burden alone, and making progress, but it's such an issue of national interest that it needs to be a State *and* a Federal priority.

Fortunately, help is at hand.

The Strong Start for America's Children Act, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin, would create and fund a State-Federal partnership that would enable States across the country to provide high quality pre-K for 4-year-olds from every low- and moderate-income family in the Nation. It would also expand access to high-quality early development programs from birth through age 3.

This legislation can help address all three of the major barriers to enlistment that the military faces. This legislation could put more children in Iowa on the path to high school graduation and the college and career opportunities that become available because of that—including the military if they choose to serve.

It will reduce crime rates and the number of kids being convicted of felonies or serious misdemeanors, which are a disqualification from military service.

Senator Harkin's bill also puts an emphasis on pre-K programs including nutrition services and education, physical activity, and obesity prevention programs. Getting our kids on the right path when it comes to their health and wellness will also ensure our potential recruits are physically fit to serve.

What's also important is the financial wisdom of this. Independent analysis of numerous research studies shows that quality early learning programs produce an average net benefit to society of \$22,000 for every child served.

Next fall, our recruiting class of 2028 either will or will not enroll in a quality early education program. The decisions we make today have a profound impact on our ability to continue to staff an increasingly technological, all-volunteer military down the road. That's why military leaders are standing beside policymakers who are acting in a bold and bipartisan manner to ensure that every child has a fair chance to succeed at whatever they choose in life. That's what this important pre-K legislation will do—and our national security depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, General. And, again, thank you for your lifetime of service to our country and for continuing to be involved in this important aspect of our readiness as a nation in terms of educating our kids.

Before I get into questions, I asked Mario Cardona, who does all of our staff work on this, to bring these two books along with me. I've been waving this book since 1992. It's called *The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Child Development and Education*. It was put out by the Committee for Economic Development.

This came out of a charge by then—before he left office—President Reagan. He had brought together the business community to chart a new course for education in America. President Reagan wanted the business leaders of America to investigate and have hearings to come up with suggestions for what we need in edu-

cation. He didn't want any of these college professors and stuff like that. He wanted hard-headed business people to tell us what we needed to do in education.

So they put together this committee. It was headed by Jim Renier, who was the chairman and CEO of Honeywell. And when you look at the roster of the people that were on this committee, they were basically the CEOs of some of our largest corporations, Ciba-Geigy, Sun Company, Aetna, Con Ed, Tulane University, Northwestern Mutual Life, Smucker's Company, Arco Chemical—you get the idea.

They met for 4 or 5 years. Finally, in 1991—it started in 1985 and by 1991, they came out with this report. I was on this committee, but I was clear down at the end. I was also at the same time the chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funded the Department of Education.

In 1991, Jim Renier made an appointment to see me. I didn't know who he was. I had forgotten all about this committee. So he brought me their findings, their book, and he wanted to meet me and talk to me about their findings. So here's this big, hard-headed business community, all these CEOs of the biggest corporations in America, and their basic finding was we've got to do more in early childhood education.

That's what this whole book is about, and that's where I picked up the phrase that education begins at birth and the preparation for education begins before birth. That comes from here. That's the business community of America, 1991, telling us we've got to put more into early education.

Well, the years go by, and we tried to do this and tried to do that and tried to focus more on early education. Three years ago, again, as chairman, I was invited down to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for their rollout of their suggestions for what we need to do in education. Again, here's the business community of America 20 years later—this is the report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce 20 years later, *Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education*. Here's the business community telling us over a span of 20 years we've got to put more into early education.

We hear from our State people, like Senator Quirmbach and others, saying that we've got to do more of that. And now we've got the military leaders of our country, admirals, generals, retired, telling us we've got to do more of this. What don't we get? Sometimes people say, "Well, we don't know if our kids are learning well enough." Well, I'm not certain adults are learning well enough.

You've got the data, and you've got the support out there, and yet we can't quite seem to move the ball forward in really getting comprehensive, universal preschool for all of our kids. As I said in my opening, Iowa has done pretty darn well. The access is good, but still when it's only 2 hours—now, you do 3 hours or 13—you do 3 hours a day at Ames, I think, right?

Senator QUIRMBACH. Twelve a week.

The CHAIRMAN. Twelve a week. It's 12 a week rather than 10 a week. And then someone else had 13.

Ms. GUEST. It's 13.

The CHAIRMAN. You have 13. Well, let's start with you, Susie. You get the minimum of 10 hours under this program. How do you afford to do 13?

Ms. GUEST. The district supports that.

The CHAIRMAN. The Des Moines Public School District?

Ms. GUEST. Des Moines Public Schools.

The CHAIRMAN. The Des Moines Public School District supports that.

Ms. GUEST. Yes, so that cost doesn't go back to the parents.

The CHAIRMAN. Christi, what about Cedar Rapids? What about that school district? What's it like there?

Ms. REGAN. In Cedar Rapids, the school district, there are about 12 to 15 hours a week.

The CHAIRMAN. How much?

Ms. REGAN. Twelve to 15 hours a week.

The CHAIRMAN. They're doing 12 to 15 in the school district.

Ms. REGAN. Yes. At HACAP Head Start, we offer anywhere from 15 hours a week to 80 hours a week.

The CHAIRMAN. Say that again. I didn't hear that.

Ms. REGAN. At HACAP Head Start, we provide services for a minimum of 15 hours, up to 80 hours a week.

The CHAIRMAN. Fifteen to—

Ms. REGAN. Eighty.

The CHAIRMAN. In preschool?

Ms. REGAN. Yes, through wraparound services.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, I see. But I'm talking just about the educational services for preschool—15 hours?

Ms. REGAN. Yes. That would be our part-day program.

The CHAIRMAN. So this varies around the State, it seems like. So what should it be? Should the States set higher minimums? Rather than 10 hours a week, should it be more than 10 hours a week? And then, of course, how do we pay for it? That's always a problem.

One of the things we're trying to do in this legislation that some of you have talked about and General Pierce talked about—Strong Start—is to get more funds to go to States so you can have more than 10 hours, or 2 hours a day. I just noticed when I drove up here this morning to Mitchell all the parents coming here dropping their kids off. And I think you said they had staggered times here. But they're here for 3½ hours?

Ms. GUEST. Three hours and fifteen minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. Three hours and fifteen minutes, and then someone has to come pick them up.

Ms. GUEST. Correct.

The CHAIRMAN. What happens when you've got two parents that are working, which is probably the case? What happens?

Ms. GUEST. As I indicated in my testimony, that is probably one of the biggest barriers for our families, and I think what happens is that the kids don't come to school. They'll find in-home daycare that may be quality daycare, but then it may not be, either. They come up with alternatives.

The CHAIRMAN. Am I off on my thinking? Should we be thinking more of full-day preschool?

Ms. GUEST. Yes. And in your Strong Start, I know that you talked about matching funds for States that already provide part-

day, that there would be matching funds from the Federal Government for the other part of that day. That would be a beautiful thing.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I got off a little bit, but I wanted to ask—oh, Susie Guest, you mentioned in your testimony—let me just find it, because I didn't understand it when I read it over the weekend. You said here, "We also take seriously the research that self-regulation is a stronger predictor of elementary school success than IQ." Explain that to me.

Ms. GUEST. Self-regulation is the ability of a child to be able to regulate their emotions. So when the teacher says, "It's time to clean up," they cleanup, or "When walking in line, here are the rules." So it's really about following rules, and a child is able to control their impulses.

The CHAIRMAN. So you say that's a better predictor of success than what their IQ may be.

Ms. GUEST. Yes. And when our kids have preschool, those are the types of skills—and in my testimony, I indicated that academics, yes, is a huge piece of the puzzle, but there are so many other pieces, such as self-regulation. If you talk with any kindergarten teacher, they'll be able to pick out which students have attended preschool, not only because of their academic skills, but also their ability to self-regulate their impulses. And we also have specific strategies that we use in our preschool classrooms to teach those self-regulation skills.

The CHAIRMAN. There are two or three things I want to cover—transportation, facilities.

Senator Quirnbach, I know you're doing a lot of work on this. I congratulate you for your leadership on this. But physical capacity can be an issue when expanded access. It's one of the things that we hear about from different areas of the country, about physical capacity.

So the work that you're doing here in Iowa—if this measure that we're talking about here becomes law, what do we do to address the issue of facilities?

Senator QUIRNBACH. Senator, that certainly is one of our concerns. We have language in the bill that loosens some of the restrictions on how the State money can be used, and, specifically, we indicate that it's acceptable to use that money for the rental of additional space. If the capacity issue is that they just don't have the classroom space, and building new school buildings or building additions is a longer term project, we make it clear that they can use some of that money for renting additional space.

We also make it clear that they can use some of that money for transportation of students, and we broaden the amount of money that can be used for administrative—sort of a general catch-all. We kept hearing from districts that they couldn't use the money to pay for toilet paper and cleaning supplies and other things that are essential to running any kind of institution with children around. We wanted to make sure that we didn't restrict districts too much there.

One thing that I would point out is when we initiated the program, our funding, which is based off of the State per pupil funding, we had started at 60 percent of the funding for a full-time stu-

dent for the part-day program. When there was a change of administration 3 years ago, there was an attempt on some people's part to—on the Governor's part—let's be clear—to cut it back to a voucher program that would be limited only to low-income students. In the Senate, we insisted that, no, it has to be universal, because, like I said, the data show that every group gains, everybody gains, so everybody should participate.

But as sort of a compromise, we ratcheted down the funding level from 60 percent down to 50 percent. We talked with school superintendents before we did that, and there was some frowning, and they said, "Well, OK. We think we can still make a go of it." But I'm not so sure that we shouldn't revisit that issue. I think it's a good idea to also visit the issue of whether we should provide more hours.

The emphasis, though, in our current effort is to just get more kids in the door. We're at about 65 percent of 4-year-olds. We'd like to get it up to about 85 percent of 4-year-olds. But there are other issues that we can address down the line.

The CHAIRMAN. If anybody wants to jump in on that, they can just jump in.

Go ahead, Barb.

Ms. MERRILL. The other thing to think about is can we use our community-based child care partners as locations. Iowa has one of the highest percentages in the country of children where one or both parents are in the workforce, meaning if they only have one parent, it's the one parent. These children are being served in child care settings—many, many, many of our 4-year-olds.

How can we work together between our public schools and our child care settings to use the existing facilities that are out there, which would allow for much more consistent care for the children, where they might have preschool there in the morning, and then have the wraparound child care for the rest of the day, as in Gabi's center.

The CHAIRMAN. This Mitchell school here—this is fantastic. It's great. And the one I saw up in Ames is great. I assume there are others around the State, too, now, and I guess there are some preschools that are comingled with elementary schools in different places, too.

But, again, if we're going to do this, I just don't know how much it will cost and what we can do. I don't know what kind of facilities are available to take care of this. If we go from 65 percent to 85 percent of kids, you've got to have capacity. You've got to have some place for them to go.

Ms. GUEST. Des Moines Public Schools currently partners with three of our daycare settings, Connigo being one of them, and Oakridge Child Care—Oakridge Academy, and then Capitol Park Child Care Center, where we do just that. We provide the universal pre-K funding, and they provide the teacher and follow all the Iowa Quality Preschool Program standards.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Gabriela, do you have capacity for more students?

Ms. GALLENTINE. I could potentially fill another classroom. Yes, I do have room in my center. I could potentially provide another classroom.

The CHAIRMAN. You have room to expand.

Ms. GALLENTINE. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. Christi, did you want to weigh in on this?

Ms. REGAN. No. I was going to say that I can speak on behalf of Head Start across the State, that many—all of us, actually, do rely on partnerships with either a local school district or another quality early childhood program to provide those Head Start services. By doing that, we are meeting the needs of the families in their own communities.

If you look at some of our smaller, rural towns, to put in a classroom of 16 Head Start services, we're not going to be able to fill those classrooms. But if we partner with the school district or another childhood program that is already in that town, we can meet those needs of everybody so that those families can access those quality services and we can meet the families where they are. If they have older children, siblings, attending school, it's a one-stop place for that family.

Maybe the child care center is located in their community. Head Start does a fantastic job of going into those neighborhoods and communities where we can serve those families, but we can't be everywhere all the time. So we do rely on those partnerships to provide those services.

Then through Head Start funds—and as we talked about before coming in here, getting your mind around that whole wraparound of how can both these partners work together in providing those funds to provide a full-day experience, because education happens throughout that whole day. It happens as the parents are dropping off their children. It happens at meal time.

Susan talked about the whole—just learning their self-regulation and how those social-emotional skills—education is happening from the time they're dropped off until the time that they are picked up. So providing a 10-hour day of services is going to be the most beneficial for children.

The CHAIRMAN. You raised some thoughts also about—what do you do in rural Iowa, small towns and communities? That's got to be a unique challenge there for transportation, especially. But so many of our small towns and communities—I can tell you, I know it very well—are kind of bedroom communities, and you have two-parent families, and they're both off to work. One goes one way and one goes the other way to a nearby larger community to do work, and they've got children.

So, No. 1, they're looking for daycare. That's always a problem, good daycare. But then if you really want those children to be involved in early learning programs, it has to be partnered with the elementary schools some way for transportation. And then we need to partner with some entities for the wraparound services.

If you've got two parents working, and they're working 20 miles away, they can't come pick up the kid at noon or 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock. So there's got to be some—I think you're right—the partnership aspect of this to provide the additional—we keep using that word, wraparound, but just supporting the child until the parents actually come home from work. That's what I call it.

You're involved with the Community Action Agency. They do a great job in the State of Iowa. You're a Head Start recipient.

Ms. REGAN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, help me out in this thinking. In the District of Columbia, we have a blended Head Start model. That's just where the Capitol is. I've looked at that. They offer universal voluntary preschool. The district uses Head Start funding to supplement their per-pupil money. They offer high-quality preschool to almost all 4-year-olds and most 3-year-olds. The classrooms meet Head Start standards. But they're a grantee, and they have a dedicated funding formula.

Why couldn't a school district or a community action agency like HACAP do the same thing here? Can you do that same thing? Can you put that money together in that dedicated funding formula for kids?

Ms. REGAN. We do that already. Through our Head Start, we are utilizing wraparound funding with Shared Visions from the Department of Education. Early Childhood Iowa funds support our programs. United Way supports programs, and then also DHS wraparound services provide. Where we partner with schools and other local child care partners—

The CHAIRMAN. So you can do that.

Ms. REGAN. Yes, we can do that.

The CHAIRMAN. But a school district can't, can you?

Ms. GUEST. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. You can use Head Start money that way? You're not a—are you a Head Start grantee?

Ms. GUEST. We are a delegate. Drake University is the grantee.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, you get it from Drake.

Ms. GUEST. Yes, we get funding through Drake, so we're considered the delegate. We serve 424 Head Start students. And next year, we will be providing more full-day programming by braiding the funding where we'll have universal preschool half the day, and Head Start will extend that day to a full-day program.

Ms. REGAN. And many Head Start programs do that as well. In the case with HACAP, where we have children enrolled into a local school district, Head Start will provide a core program hours, and then that school district will supplement the remainder of that school day with voluntary preschool or Shared Visions funding. And then we just partner together to make sure that those services are provided. So it is a case of braided funding.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that's encouraging, because one of the things I said to you earlier before we started the hearing is that I've been involved in this a long time, and just when I think I understand it, then I figure out I don't understand all of the different funding streams and how that money comes in and crosses this and goes over here. It's just—it's almost like spaghetti—all these different funding things.

One of the things I hope we're trying to do in our bill is to somehow streamline and simplify that some way, aside from raising quality and providing money. So I'd like any help you can give me on how your job would be made better, easier, more efficient by figuring out how we do these different funding streams.

As I said before, and I'll say this openly, every time we start a program—I assume it's true on the State level, too, but it's true on the Federal level. We start something to meet a need. There's a

distinct need in society, so we establish something. Then that goes on, and then we see a different need, and we provide something for that, and it goes on.

Then what happens is pretty soon, you have all these different streets and roads out there that are trying to meet certain needs. And then at some point, you say, "Wait a minute. Can't we put these together in some way to make it more efficient, less confusing?"

Again, I'll just offer this up—and I would take any comments to the contrary—that if we had universal preschool for all children, and you didn't have to worry about how much money your family made or income status or anything like that, wouldn't that make it a lot easier?

Ms. REGAN. Oh, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. I've been involved in school lunch and school breakfast programs in my service on the Agriculture Committee all these years. And we basically have shown in the past that rather than setting up all of these things for free and reduced price lunches and all the paperwork you have to go through—if somebody makes a little bit more in a month, then they have to go off it, and then they have to come back on it again. That costs a lot of money.

If you just said for everybody there's free breakfast and lunches, it just doesn't cost that much more money, and it's just very streamlined. That's what I think about in terms of early childhood education. Why don't we just kind of start biting the bullet and saying, "Look, what is so magic about the age of 5 and kindergarten?" That was started some time ago.

But that's when one parent worked and one parent was home. It was different times. As nostalgic as we may be—and we might wish we had that—times have changed. So what's so magic about that? I mean, why is it that we just think of—well, kids at the earliest possible time—90 percent of your brain development is before you're age 5.

So why aren't we thinking about kids starting school when they're born? It seems to me we could knock off a lot of the confusion, and I think perhaps even some—I don't want to say wasteful spending, but inefficient spending by streamlining it that way. It might cost more money in the long run. I don't know. Probably so.

But there's a lot of inefficient spending in education today. Need I mention the amount of money—taxpayers money, your money, my money—that's being siphoned off for the for-profit schools in higher education, and how many billions of dollars every year go to hedge fund managers on Wall Street, and people making \$20 million a year as the head of one of these? And yet the highest default rate among students who borrow money to go to college is in the for-profit school business.

So it seems to me that maybe changing that around and taking some of that billions and billions of dollars and putting it into early childhood education might be money better spent in education in this country. Well, those are just my thoughts on that. But I guess I'm still looking for advice—since we're not there yet—on universal preschool. What can we do to at least make the funding streams better, more logical perhaps, easier to access? I'm still looking for

suggestions, not that you have to do it here, but if you have any thoughts on that that you want to convey to me or my committee, let me know.

Senator QUIRMBACH. Senator, if I could, it is certainly a lot less headaches if we didn't have to sort through the paperwork and all of the form filling out and who is eligible and who is not eligible. We could save a lot of money there that would be better invested in educating the kids.

The other benefit from universal access is that we get all these kids into the same room together, and before they get old enough to focus on differences, they learn that they have more in common. You saw that in that classroom, and you were wonderful with those kids on Saturday. You were just terrific.

But you saw kids in Ames from all different kinds of backgrounds, different ethnicities, different income levels. They're all learning to play together. They all learn that they have much more in common than what they have separating them. That's at least as important as any paperwork saving.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I'm preaching to the choir here, but these kids are like sponges. I mean, they want to learn. You just see it in them. And I go to these little classrooms like I just did here, the one in Ames or others I've been to, and, boy, they're just anxious. And you get a good teacher, a good qualified teacher that's well trained, coached—boy, these kids—they just learn so fast. And to deny kids that opportunity when their brains are growing at this rapid rate—it's just a shame.

General, I think what you're saying is that we pay for it later on. If we don't pay for it now, we're paying later on.

When I introduced my bill, the Strong Start bill—was it a month ago, 2 months ago—November. Well, time goes by. But one of the persons at the rollout of the bill was the sheriff of Hennepin County, Minnesota—Minneapolis, Twin Cities. I didn't know this individual. I think he was asked to come by the police organization or sheriff's organization.

I spoke, George Miller spoke, and different people spoke as we introduced our bill at a press conference. Then he was the last person to speak, and he said, "Let me introduce myself. I am the guy you pay later." I thought that was very profound. He said, "If you don't do this, I'm the guy you're paying later to lock them up, take them to the criminal justice system, juvenile court system."

I just thought that—sort of like you're saying. We should be doing this now rather than trying to pay the court system later on. And I think we have enough data. We have a lot of data, General, to show that if these kids are denied—the data shows that those that have good preschool are less likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system later on.

General PIERCE. I'll just add to what you're saying, Senator, and this has been over several years now. Our graduation rates from high school in the United States are—25 percent of our students don't graduate from high school. That's across the Nation.

The CHAIRMAN. Twenty-five percent.

General PIERCE. Iowa's doing great—well, a lot better. They're like 92 percent graduation. But if 25 percent of your students aren't graduating from high school, when 80 percent of your jobs

in the next 10 years are going to require some education beyond high school, you won't have an employable kind of citizen, and they're not productive citizens for the United States of America.

They're going to probably be minimum wage kind of folks. They're not qualifying for the military. They're not qualifying for what our business community needs in the United States. If you project that out year after year after year, that 25 percent non-high school graduate rate, it becomes a real burden on society to generate the incomes which leads to the criminal record because they can't survive with that non-high school education. So my opinion is if you can fix education, we'll fix a lot of problems in the United States of America.

The CHAIRMAN. There's been some data that they've rolled out about Head Start not being that effective because you get fade-out, that by third grade, all that support kind of fades out by then. One of you talked about that. Was that you? Who talked about the fade-out. Can you explain that at all, Christi, about this fade-out that people talk about?

Ms. REGAN. There have been some studies completed that are stating or showing that by the time a child that has been enrolled in Head Start reaches third grade, those benefits have already gone away. Now, as a Head Start community, we will say that's not accurate and that's not a true reflection of the population that we serve.

We are serving families that are at or below 100 percent of the Federal poverty guideline. They are considered at-risk. They have a lot of barriers that are in front of them. For a lot of our families, it's a case of: How am I going to feed my family today? How am I going to get away from a partner who is assaulting me on a daily basis?

So as we talk about with Head Start, we are providing those comprehensive services. Yes, we are concerned about the education of young children, but we also recognize that a child who is coming to school every day hungry is not ready to learn. A child who has not gone to the dentist and has a toothache is not ready to learn. A child who is not getting adequate sleep or nutrition on a daily level is not ready to learn. So we're working with that family very extensively to overcome those barriers.

As I said, we pride ourselves on that whole comprehensive aspect. We're providing them with family support workers. We're providing them with the teachers. We're providing them with all those social services that we recognize. We can work to assist those families.

Then, not to downgrade our public school systems, but when you come to the public school systems, there's not the family support workers. There's not all those services that are there. Some do, yes. But for the most part, it is a case of then—we all hear about having to reach those levels of skills for children. So I think sometimes that comprehensive aspect is taken away from the families.

So through Head Start, we're really working on that family to become also that advocate—that they're asking those questions: How is my child learning? How is my child growing? So when they leave Head Start and go into the public school—and not even when they're in kindergarten, but as they go through all of the school,

those parents are actively involved in that child's life, because we know that an active, involved parent is going to result in a child who is going to be ready to succeed.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I see I'm running out of time. I'm going to open it up to the audience. All I would ask is that you identify yourself for the recorder who is recording this, and if your name is not Smith or Jones, maybe you should spell it out so she can get it right.

Charlie Bruner.

Dr. BRUNER. Bruner, B-r-u-n-e-r. Thank you. We want to have effective services, Senator Harkin. But I think we also have to recognize for every dollar our society invests in school-age kids, in K-12 education, we invest about 25 cents in young children's education and development in the preschool years and 7 cents in the birth-to-3 years.

The brain development research and the early childhood adversity research in toxic stress says those first 3 years of life are just critical for cognitive development, social development, physical development, and emotional development. I really want to commend Strong Start for having the funding in for the early childhood partnerships and expanding Early Head Start, which is probably the premier program at the Federal level for dealing with the birth-to-3 population.

We have to recognize that that serves 1 percent of kids today in the birth-to-3 years. And the half billion dollar expansion is really important and I think will add to that. Home visiting serves about half of 1 percent of kids. We really have to focus, yes, on universal preschool, but also on those birth-to-3 years and strengthening the families that are there.

We're celebrating the 50th year anniversary of the War on Poverty. That's the right term. But between 1964 and 2014, 50 years, we've reduced senior poverty by 70 percent. It was 30 percent in 1964. It's less than 9 percent today. Child poverty has gone up from 18 percent to 20 percent.

We may not be able to immediately reduce child poverty. But we have to give those kids a chance, a much better chance, for achieving the American Dream, and that does mean the Strong Start program. But it really also means: How can we strengthen and support these families in those first 3 years of life?

One thing I would ask you to do—and I know you're already doing this—but I think that there's one area where we don't need congressional action. We already have the tools in the Federal administration, and that is with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. They have funding available, and we've been promoting with the American Academy of Pediatrics and nurse practitioners and the whole contingent of Iowans for a Federal opportunity announcement specifically on young children and their healthy development and working to strengthen families in those birth-to-5 years.

There's \$5.5 billion left in their budget. The difficulty in securing that has been that, historically, CMMI has looked for returns on investment of 3 years. When you're talking about young kids, you need a longer timeframe.

But I think that there's an opportunity for putting funding into a Federal opportunity announcement and gearing up people like Deb Waldron and Cheryl Jones and Rizwan Shah and Chris Atchison here in Iowa to really push for comprehensive approaches in terms of those first 3 years of life and the role of the child health practitioner. That child health practitioner universally sees those kids and has an opportunity to be that first responder.

The CHAIRMAN. Charlie, let me ask you this. CMMI—I'm very familiar with it. You're right. They've got about \$5 billion. They get funded every 10 years, and they get \$10 billion. So this is 2014. They've gone through about half of the money, but some of it was siphoned off, and don't get me started on that.

But are you saying—have you applied, or do you know—help me think. You have applied for some funding from CMMI to do some innovative type things on this birth-to-3?

Dr. BRUNER. We have encouraged and pushed for CMMI to create a Federal opportunity announcement like they've done in innovations for chronic health diseases, but this time focusing upon young children and a healthy start in life, and draw on evidence-based models, like Help Me Grow and Child First and Reach Out and Read, to really create that.

We're not applying ourselves. They have to create, in effect, a grant program. And we've talked with Dr. Conway, Patrick Conway, who is the head of the CMMI. I think they're receptive about it. We think it fits in with your agenda and the President's agenda.

The sticking point has been that kids are not cost drivers of the healthcare system. But they're ultimately cost solutions. If we get them on a healthy trajectory and reduce their early childhood adversity, we know that that's going to create gains. So we need a longer time horizon and a push around that. I think that the President and you and other Members of Congress could be very instrumental in promoting a half-billion-dollar Federal opportunity announcement around young kids through CMMI.

The CHAIRMAN. I just asked Mario to followup on this. Have you talked to Adrienne Hallett on my staff at all about this?

Dr. BRUNER. I talked with Nick and—

The CHAIRMAN. Jenelle.

Dr. BRUNER. Yes, Jenelle Krishnamoorthy.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I want to get my appropriations people also involved. How long ago did you talk to them about this?

Dr. BRUNER. Oh, I think about a—

The CHAIRMAN. I mean, about using CMMI for this.

Dr. BRUNER. Right, right.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks very much, Charlie. Thank you for your leadership on these issues for so many years here in the State of Iowa. We appreciate it.

Anybody else? Somebody back here?

Ms. WALTER. Good morning. My name is Stacey Walter, and I just wanted to speak on behalf of community child care. It seems that when we have conversations around birth-to-5, it always ends up landing on that 4-year-old preschool and pre-K education.

I happen to work in the coalition that Gabi is a part of, and I'm a community partner with Susie in the Des Moines Public School

District and oversee three of the programs. What I wanted to say was as we talk about expanding access for those 4-year-olds, keeping in mind that in community child care, it's the 4-year-olds that make or break that child care program, because the way that a ratio works in State child care, infants are served at a ratio of 1 to 4, while preschoolers are 1 to 12. So, obviously, that's where they make their money.

So just taking into consideration—if we are trying to increase access to that statewide preschool program and increase to 85 percent of our children being served in that program, remember that in community child care, then, we're going to take away that potential income. What will happen—when it takes two to three preschool children to support an infant program in community-based child care, we would essentially be eliminating some possible infant slots in community-based child care if that would happen to be the case, and expanding those community partnerships.

Also remembering that, currently, the way the funding works in a community partnership, those funds are limited to just that classroom and the personnel in that classroom. It doesn't go into the general fund of the community child care program. Hence, you still need to be serving 4-year-olds on top of the statewide voluntary 4-year-old children in the program, so that you, in turn, can continue to serve your infants and toddlers.

So just something to keep in mind is that in communities, especially those rural areas where we're really struggling to provide quality community child care, if we start to really eliminate those 4-year-old opportunities in the business sense, it will start to have an impact, then, on the bottom line of the overall program.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand that.

Anybody else have something they wanted to add?

Ms. DAVIS. Judy McCoy Davis. Hi, there, Senator. I serve as chair of Polk County Early Childhood and previously served as the chair of Early Childhood Iowa. I want to commend you for doing this work and being such a strong supporter of early childhood efforts.

But I want to encourage you that whenever you meet with business people, that you ask them what they're doing to support it, because while the studies all show business gains greatly when early childhood is supported, if you really look at what they're doing legislatively, we're not high on their priorities. When I speak to Rotary Clubs and others, I say this is a time when I can combine my business background and my passion. But we really need more business people in forums like this.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, as I said, Judy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce just came out with a report saying: this is what we've got to be doing. So I would hope the business community—and I think the Iowa Business Council has been very strong on this, haven't they, Herman?

Senator QUIRMBACH. Yes. Elliott Smith has come to talk to the Senate Education Committee from the Iowa Business Council. We have some real standout supporters, Principal Insurance, for example. I should not just list one or two, but, generally speaking, some

people speaking out have been very supportive from the business community. Of course, we could always use more support.

The CHAIRMAN. That's true. And it does all come down—not all, but most of it comes down to resources, money. Are the people of Iowa willing to use their tax money for this? Are the people of Des Moines or different school districts—are they willing to step up? Because what we're talking about is, as I said earlier, pay now or pay later, and when you pay later, you pay in very detrimental ways.

But people have to understand that if we want this, we're going to have to pay for it. It's not free. And if you want high-quality—I mean, you can get education on the cheap, and then you've got cheap education.

But if you want high-quality early childhood, especially in that early birth-to-3, and you want really good daycare, and you want qualified people with those kids, and you want good home visits and parental involvement and making sure kids get their dental work, and their other healthcare is attended to, and nutrition, and sociability, and then making sure they get the right intellectual stimulus between ages 0 and 3, it costs money.

We all wish we had those two-parent families and someone at home who would do that at home. But that's not the society we're in right now. We just don't have that. So we're going to have to pay for that.

Anybody else?

Ms. LOWERY. My name is Kameka Lowery. It's K-a-m-e-k-a. I just wanted to say that there is support in Central Iowa. I am a director of Women's Leadership Connection, which is a part of United Way of Central Iowa. You've heard it a couple of times here today. I am a part of and help represent over 600 women in Central Iowa that's dedicated just this past year over \$1.6 million specifically to this area, and it has accumulated to almost \$20 million in the past 11 years.

So there are people who are very vested in this and do see the outcomes, and that is the purpose of these over 600 women coming together and filling in those gaps and trying to help make up the difference that really does show those measurable outcomes. So there is definitely passion within the State and dedication toward this particular area.

The CHAIRMAN. That's very impressive. I didn't know that.

Anything else? We've got one right here. Go ahead.

Ms. BURNS. Good morning, Senator Harkin. I'm Ellie Burns from Iowa TRIO. I just wanted to say thank you for the work that you're doing with early childhood. TRIO programs start working with students in sixth grade, and if we can work with students who have been told since they're 4 years old that they can be successful in their education, it's just helping our advocacy efforts that much more. So thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you for those kind words.

Ms. RUSSELL. I'm Judy Russell, and I work for Drake University Head Start. I moved here from a different State, a State that has defunded most of their early childhood programs. So coming to Iowa was a breath of fresh air, because we really do know how to do it here. We are really a model.

Someone once told me if we had the Great Lakes in Iowa, we would call them the Really Pretty Good Lakes. Well, people should come and look at what happens here, what happens at school districts, what happens in Head Start, what happens in child care centers, because, truly, Iowa really does have it together. And my view from the very cheap seats, not being a native Iowan, is that a lot of it is because of your leadership.

So thank you for what you've done for early childhood in Iowa and the Nation. And send your people here to look at Iowa, because it's really exceptional. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, you're nice to say that. Thank you. I'll have to spread that around. Herman and Charlie Bruner have been working—there's so many here in Iowa who have been working on this for a long time and on both sides of the political aisle, too, I might add. And the business community has been very good in Iowa. We've had good support.

I guess sort of the old thing about being an Iowan is that we do some good things in this State, and this is one of them. But how do I say this? Yes, we're OK. But we can be a lot better. I guess that's what I'm trying to say. We've got a good floor on this. We've got a good establishment out there. Now we just need to go from what, 65 to 85, or whatever that is, and then we have to do what Charlie Bruner said. We've really got to focus on that 0 to 3 age group. So let's not rest on our laurels. Let's keep pushing Iowa to higher and higher standards.

But you're right. From my standpoint of chair of this committee and looking at the rest of the country, we are very fortunate here in this State. We've got good leadership here, both political leadership and civic leadership around the State, and our various organizations have been very good.

So I guess I could say we're so good we don't have to do anything else. But that's not quite right. What I'm trying to do with this legislation is get this nationwide, all over the country.

Any last thing that I need to do before I gavel this thing to a close? I don't have a gavel, but—

Ms. GALLENTINE. Senator Harkin, if I may—

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. GALLENTINE. Gabi, right here.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, I'm sorry, Gabriela.

Ms. GALLENTINE. I beg your pardon. If I may, first of all, I want to thank you for including the language regarding comprehensive services for children and families, because it does take parental involvement for children to succeed, and as much as possible, that needs to be included. Home visitation and—if you would, please remember to consider that those kinds of support services need to be provided as closely located to where the children are receiving their services, if not onsite.

We see tremendous growth in children who are served onsite. Many of them are able to exit out of speech and occupational therapy before they move on to the 4-year-old room. So that is of critical importance for that birth to age 3. And I thank you for including that language regarding comprehensive services and parental involvement. That is key.

The CHAIRMAN. We didn't talk much about that today, and I'm ready to close this hearing down. But we all know—I mean, it's sort of intuitive, but we know it from data, too, that these kids do a lot better when you get the parents involved, not just in dropping them off, but being involved in the whole aspect, and that is especially true in that 0-to-3 age group.

But you're right. We've got to continue to have parental involvement, coaching, mentoring, things like that to help these parents, because they want to do the right thing. A lot of times, they just don't know what to do, and they have busy lives. They're working all the time, and they just don't know what to do a lot of times. So they need that kind of help and support. So thanks for mentioning that before we close up here today.

I want to thank our witnesses for sharing their expertise and views and providing their insight and for the work that you're doing right now. I thank my colleagues. I especially want to thank Senator Alexander, our Ranking Member, for his partnership on this hearing. Again, I request that the record remain open for 10 days until March 24th for people to submit statements and additional questions for the record.

If there's nothing more to come before the committee, the committee is adjourned. Thank you very much, everyone.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

MARCH 19, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR HARKIN: Thank you for coming to Des Moines to hold your hearing on the bill you are sponsoring, Strong Start for America's Children Act.

Pre-School is now being offered in a patchwork, fragmented manner and is not covering the need of many of our young children. We need to provide all day pre-school, for all 4-year-olds, especially kids living in poverty. There needs to be a streamlined funding source that is consistent and reliable. The Des Moines District is currently receiving funding from five different funding sources, all with different rules and regulations. The time to braid all of the funding sources and then apply them to the children we serve could be better spent.

Some suggestions I would like you to consider:

1. **Head Start should cover the children 0-3**—Head Start would provide the services and the programs geared to 0-3 age bracket. It could be kept under HHS.

2. Move all 4-year-old pre-school programs to the Department of Education—Pre-K programs should be geared for academics and is a better fit if it would be under the Department of Education.

3. Review all dollars being spent in the area for children of 0-5 and re-allocate based on best practices and research. One example of dollars not reaching the students is the following:

- Head Start allocates money to the Grantee and then they award dollars to the Delegate—In the case of Des Moines, Drake is the Grantee and DMPS is the Delegate. We serve 50% of the students and receive around 33 percent of the dollars. Head Start sends a team of people out every few years to evaluate the program; this must cost the government thousands of dollars. Let the dollars be allocated to where the needs are, not in administrative bureaucracy. I am sure there are other examples of programs that have been set up for years and exist because they always have.

I applaud the work you are doing on this very important issue, if we are going to improve educational outcomes for children in this country we must provide them with the start they deserve.

Sincerely,

CONNIE BOESEN,
Des Moines School Board.

[Whereupon, at 11:07 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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