

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2012

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary and Madam Secretary,

We are strong supporters of your efforts to improve access to quality early learning programs, especially for low income children. As you know, the final Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations Conference Report Statement of Managers included language supporting the inclusion of a strong early childhood education provision within the Race to the Top competition: "The conferees expect that the Secretary will include a robust early childhood education component in administering the Race to the Top competition."

In 2011, 35 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico applied for the Early Learning Challenge competition within Race to the Top. It is critical to continue the Early Learning Challenge, as implemented in 2011, to effectively promote improved outcomes for high-needs children through a coordinated statewide, state-led development of a quality system that supports all aspects of a child's early learning. Although only nine states won in the competition's first round, by completing the grant application, all applicants made major progress in developing a coordinated early learning plan across state agencies and programs.

We strongly support a second round of the Early Learning Challenge competition within Race to the Top to build on the work the applicants started and to encourage new states to improve their early childhood systems as well. The state-level Early Learning Challenge competition provides a critical opportunity to coordinate early learning systems in a way that can only happen at the state level.

We urge you to build on the success and enthusiasm of Round One by devoting a meaningful portion of the Fiscal Year 2012 Race to the Top appropriation toward Round Two of the state-level Early Learning Challenge.

Sincerely,

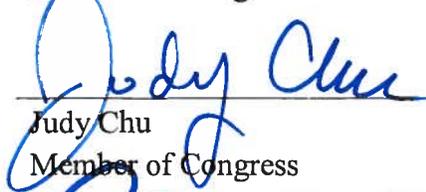

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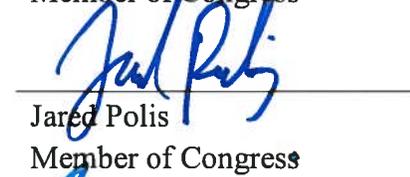

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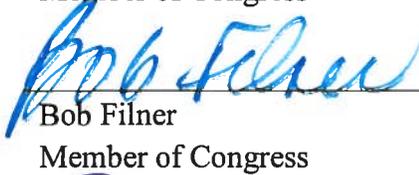
CC: Roberto Rodriguez, White House Domestic Policy Council

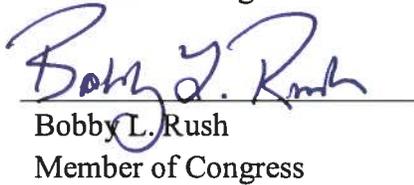

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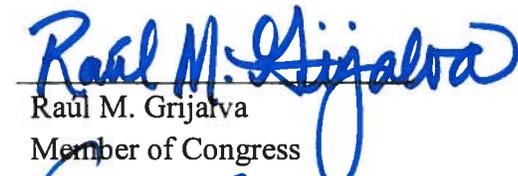

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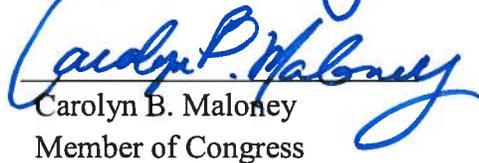

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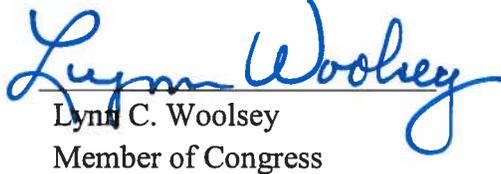

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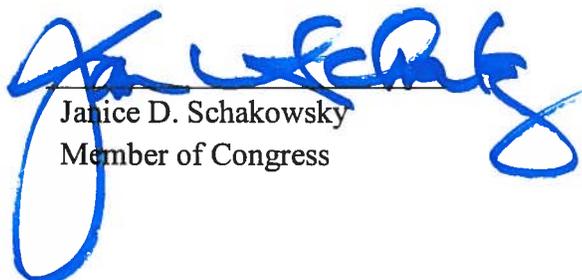

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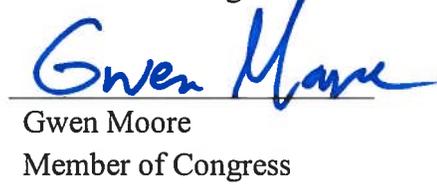

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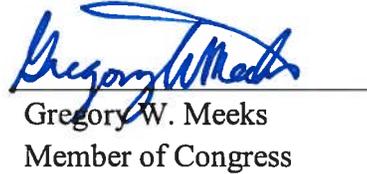

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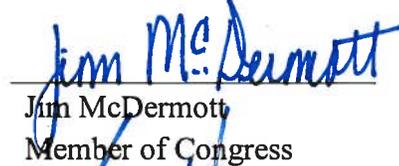

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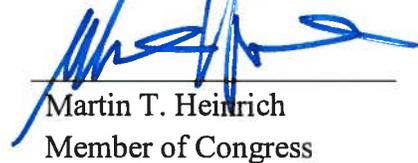

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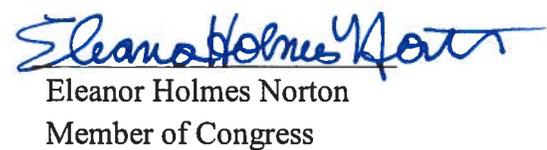

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