

CONGRESSMAN JARED POLIS

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CONTINUUM OF LEARNING ACT

The quality of a child's education in the earliest years dramatically impacts his or her later success in school and in life. Decades of research show that a lack of access to quality preschool or childcare can result in grade repetition, special education placement, school completion, college success, job opportunities and earnings and delinquency and crime. Given the stakes, it is critical that the U.S. better coordinate every child's transition from pre-K into elementary school.

Without creating any new program or requiring any new spending, the Continuum of Learning Act would align early childhood standards, connect programs to prepare early childhood teachers and ensure comprehensive collection of data. The bill provides educators in the school building, including principals, with the support needed to create a continuum of learning for every child to succeed emotionally, socially and cognitively.

Specifically, the Continuum of Learning Act:

- Amends the school improvement program under Title I A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to help states improve early learning guidelines for preschool-age children and early learning standards for children in kindergarten through third grade;
- Ensures that early learning guidelines and standards are developmentally appropriate and to cover all domains of child development and learning; and,
- Encourages local educational agencies (LEAs) and elementary schools to use school improvement funds to offer early childhood education programs from birth to school entry, as well as to assist schools, teachers and program coordinators to prepare them for early childhood education.

The bill also requires LEAs to:

- Assist their elementary schools in conducting a ready school needs review to create a school environment that supports children's transition to school and achievement of state and grade level expectations;
- Ensure that teachers in the early elementary school grades have a specialized early childhood education teaching license, credential or endorsement; and
- Work with early childhood education programs to establish continuity of curricular objectives and developmental expectations that support children's transition to school.
- Limits the use of child assessments for children from birth through second grade;
- Amends Title II A (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund) of the ESEA to require states to incorporate knowledge regarding early childhood development and learning into teacher and principal preparation programs and encourage on-going support through professional development opportunities;
- Promotes professional development activities to include training in early child development and learning and provide joint training for elementary school staff and early childhood education program staff.

The bill is endorsed by: National Association for the Education of Young Children; National Association of Elementary School Principles; National Women's Law Center; National Head Start Association; Center for Law & Social Policy (CLASP); highScope Educational Research Foundation; National Disability Rights Network (NDRN); Learning Disabilities Association of America; First Five Years Fund; ZERO TO THREE; Early Care & Education Consortium; and, Easter Seals.