

Center for American Progress Action Fund



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

“THE PUSH FOR QUALITY PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION”

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D-NY)

SENATOR BOB CASEY (D-PA)

INTRODUCTION BY:

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FEATURED PANELISTS:

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10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2007

TRANSCRIPT PROVIDED BY

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MR. JOHN PODESTA: Good morning everyone. I'm John Podesta, and on behalf of the Center for American Progress Action Fund it's a pleasure to welcome you to today's event, "The Push for Quality Pre-School Education." We're very fortunate to have one of our nation's outstanding – two of our nation's outstanding leaders on this issue with us this morning to discuss their recently introduced Pre-Kindergarten Bills and provide their insights on the issue. Senator Clinton and Senator Casey will speak in a second.

First, I'd like to tell you why early education is so important to us here at the Center. Every day around here, we work hard to build an opportunity nation where every working person can realize their hopes and their dreams. Key to that is a world-class public education system, but as you all know, our current educational system is outmoded and too often shortchanges low-income and minority students. Today, we're going to focus on one aspect of that world-class education system: early childhood education.

In recent years there have been dramatic strides in our understanding of early childhood learning and development, and one thing we know to be true: while public schooling may begin at age five or six, a child's learning begins at birth. A young child's early experiences and relationships play a crucial role in shaping his or her behavior, health, and education later in life. We also know that the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children are enormous and that they're established long before children start school. As a result, an overall approach for states and our nation has to focus on how to promote early education and healthy child development in the range of settings in which young children spend time: in their homes, in child care and Head Start programs, preschool settings, and school settings.

We need to be thinking about comprehensive early care and family support that tackles these challenges from birth. In today's event, we'll focus on one key part of that strategy: the importance of ensuring access to preschool as an essential part of early childhood development and education. Research shows that for every dollar invested in high-quality preschool education there is a return of up to \$7 in long-term education outcomes and earnings, as well as a decrease in crime and teen pregnancy and welfare and the need for special and remedial education. We create a virtuous cycle when we invest in early education.

Research also shows the children who start school behind tend to stay behind, and an unacceptable number of our nation's children are simply not ready for school when they begin kindergarten. In 1999, only about 39 percent of all three to five-year-olds had at least three of the four literacy school readiness skills, such as recognizing letters, counting to 20 or higher, writing their names, or reading or pretending to read.

Lack of school readiness stems from multiple sources, but one giant source is poverty. Parents of low-income children are more likely to have lower levels of education and know less about cultivating early language and cognitive and social skills. They also have limited access to learning activities like libraries and museums, which

promote high levels of development in children. And today, sadly, over one-fifth of our children under the age of five are poor. Persistent childhood poverty is estimated to cost our nation \$500 billion a year, or about 4 percent of our nation's GDP. Impoverished children earn less, are less productive, find themselves in trouble with the criminal justice system more often, and have more health related expenses.

We're falling short in financing early education for the majority of our three to four-year-old preschoolers, especially in comparison to other industrialized nations. Just to give you an example, Belgium, France, and Italy have 95 to 99 percent of their three-year-olds in early childhood education.

The American state-run pre-kindergarten programs, on the other hand, currently serve several 700,000 young kids in state programs and about 800,000 through Head Start. That's about 20 percent of our nation's three to four-year-olds. Children, regardless of their parents' circumstances, should be offered quality early education opportunities, meaning that all three and four-year-olds should have access to universal, full-day, quality kindergarten. A nation that purports to value advancement for all and equality and justice for all cannot tolerate the status quo, which is our leaving our children dramatically undereducated and unprepared for the 21st-century workplace.

Now it's time to move beyond the rhetoric of education reform and take a good, hard look at what works. That's why it's a pleasure to have two great experts and great champions for our nation's kids. I think probably they need no introduction, but I'm going to say a couple of words about each of them.

First, my longtime friend Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. Senator Clinton has been committed to the well-being of our children for decades, from her work at the Children's Defense Fund to her work on the Child Health Insurance Program during my kind of the White House. She has shown unwavering commitment to taking care of our children and giving them an opportunity to succeed. As a senator from New York, she's worked to improve our child welfare system, she's championed legislation that would expand after-school programs and make high quality childcare more accessible and affordable for working families. In her time in the Senate, she's won the admiration and respect of her colleagues from both sides of the aisle. Her high-profile status, combined with her reputation as a smart, serious senator, makes her one of the most influential leaders in our country on this question.

Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania matches Senator's Clinton commitment to our nation's children. Senator Casey's first job out of college was working in Philadelphia as a fifth grade teacher. He has long been an advocate of giving our children a head start with a good education. As Pennsylvania's auditor general and state treasurer, Senator Casey was a strong advocate for our children and public education. He conducted the first ever performance reviews of schools and school districts in Pennsylvania to improve their efficiency and make sure that more dollars got into the classroom. In 2001, he hosted a conference at Harvard University that highlighted research demonstrating the effectiveness of educating students at three and four years old. He's fought for state monies for preschools. When he ran for the Senate, he committed to

enhancing Head Start and assistance to states in their efforts to establish quality pre-K programs so all children could enter in schools ready to learn.

We're going to have a panel following the senators and on that panel is Harriet Dichter, who's led the effort in Pennsylvania to sort of put those monies in place. So with that, Senator Clinton and Casey have introduced an important and ambitious goal. We're anxious to hear from them, so first let me turn it over to Senator Clinton.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

SEN. HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY): Well, it's wonderful to be back here at the Center for American Progress, which has done so much important work in its relatively young life. We're talking about preschool, and the Center for American Progress is just beginning, but obviously showing great development and results.

It is really a privilege to be here with my colleague and friend, Senator Casey. Senator Casey, as John said, has a great deal of interest in the well-being of young children. He comes from a family that has really focused on maximizing the opportunity and the chances of every person to live up to his or her God-given potential, and it is a great honor to be here with him.

I also want to recognize the panelists, some of whom I have worked with over many years. Cynthia Brown, who has been a champion of education, including early childhood education for many, many years. Cynthia and I worked together longer ago than either of us care to remember. Carol Brunson Day, president and CEO of the National Black Child Development Institute, a longtime advocate on behalf of children of color and a real understanding of what it would take to close the gaps that still too often interfere with children's potential. Harriet Dichter, who as – was just referenced is the deputy secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Pennsylvania is doing some very exciting work in education. I really salute Harriet and the government for their commitment. And Libby Doggett, executive director of Pre-K Now, a wonderful advocacy group that is putting pre-K on the nation's priority list. And so many of you who are here in the audience. I see Pat Schroeder, my longtime friend, former member of Congress, and others of you who have been beating the drums for early childhood going back decades long.

And I think that perhaps the stars are finally coming into alignment because the evidence has caught up with the advocacy. Many of us have known for a very long time that this needs to be a priority, but now it is abundantly clear that we have to invest in early childhood if we expect to remain competitive in a global economy, if we expect to honor our obligations to poor children, children of color, children from disadvantaged backgrounds where English is not the first language, so that they too can have as good a chance as possible to fulfill their own dreams and contribute to our country.

So this is an issue near and dear to my heart. It's one that I have fought for,

believed in, written about, talked about, and now trying to legislate about for over 35 years. It is also something that I come to as a mother, because clearly what I tried to do with my husband to invest in our own daughter, we did because we thought it was important. It wasn't a luxury. It wasn't some kind of casual commitment. We understood that trying to make those first five years as rich a learning environment as possible would lay the groundwork for everything that came after. And like everyone in this room, I have seen what happens when we invest in our children. When caring adults and families and in the village, as I like to refer to it, come together to make a commitment.

You know, I saw it back in Arkansas when I brought a program called HIPPY from Israel to Arkansas, where it now has the largest program in our country to help teach parents how they could become their children's first teachers. We taught them the importance of talking to their children, reading to their children, and if they were somewhat uncomfortable reading because of their own skills, using a book to tell stories, but interacting in a very verbal way with their own children; using household objects to teach lessons that so many of us just take for granted; using the assets of whatever community they were in, from getting a library card to going to museums or other sites that could be enriching experiences for their children – what all of us have tried to do for our own children.

I've seen it in Head Start and Early Head Start programs where children were learning to read, to count, to solve problems, to develop the habits of socialization and discipline that would enable them to interact with others and succeed in a structured environment like school. And we are seeing it around our country in states that have begun investing in early childhood programs.

Three years ago, only 11 of America's governments had pre-kindergarten on their policy and budget agendas. This year the number is 29. But state-funded pre-K programs currently serve less than 15 percent of three and four-year-olds. If we add Head Start we're up to about 20 percent, but that is woefully behind what is being done by some of major competitors. And I have seen the very positive effects of these early childhood programs in other countries, and I don't think we have a choice any longer. I think that we have to invest in early childhood for all of the reasons that we've discussed.

This is about the success of our children in school. It is about basic fairness. It is about closing the achievement gap. And it is about our global competitiveness in the international economy.

That's why I have introduced the Ready to Learn Act. We have to recognize that voluntary universal preschool is no longer something to be talked about. We must act on it. It is something that I believe goes hand in hand with school reform. Much of what we spend money on in school reform is not proven to be as effective as early childhood education, so by taking our federal, state, and local dollars and beginning to shift them into early childhood, we will actually get better results than how we are currently spending a lot of those dollars.

Children who attend high-quality pre-K programs are less likely to be held back a grade or to need special education. They are more likely to graduate from high school, to have higher earnings as adults, less likely to become dependent on welfare or involved in crime. And the reality is that while many parents can afford high-quality pre-K opportunities for their children, many hardworking families simply cannot.

As a result, in today's current education system, it is not unusual at all for many children to arrive at kindergarten already behind their peers. Nearly 50 percent of kindergarten teachers report that at least half of their children come to school with problems that hinder their success. One in every six kindergartners needs specialized, one-on-one tutoring or special instruction in a small group. Each year more than 200,000 children repeat kindergarten.

When I was first lady, I hosted a White House conference on early childhood development and learning where expert after expert emphasized the importance of these early years. A child who arrives at kindergarten ready to learn has a far greater chance of excelling not only in his or her early years, but far into his academic career. Studies show that children who learn the names and sounds of letters before entering kindergarten are 20 times more likely to read simple words by the end of kindergarten than children who enter kindergarten not knowing the letters of the alphabet. Eighty-eight percent of children who are poor readers in first grade remained poor readers by fourth grade. Children who are not at least modestly skilled readers by the end of third grade are unlikely to graduate from high school.

The arc is very clear. You start kindergarten behind, you are more likely to stay behind. By the time you are eight or nine years old, if you are still behind you begin to internalize that message that you're just not smart enough, you're just not good enough, and the path to a high school dropout is laid.

So the money we don't spend on our children before kindergarten we end up spending in special education, crime, welfare, unemployment, lower productivity. We already know that for every \$1 we spend on early childhood education we reap \$7 as a society in returns.

One study indicates that in total annual benefits, voluntary universal pre-kindergarten pays for itself within nine years, and by an increasing margin each year after that. By the year 2050, such a program is estimated to generate government budget benefits through higher incomes and lower social costs of \$191 billion. The same study also shows that voluntary universal pre-kindergarten would increase the future wages and benefits of children who participate to the tune of about \$432 billion by 2050. Investments in pre-kindergarten will dramatically reduce crime and the costs that come with it, saving an estimated \$156 billion nationwide by 2050.

Another important aspect of this, which doesn't come from me – people would say, “Well, you've been a child advocate all your adult life. Of course you would believe that,” but the Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis recently did a study asking themselves: what one investment could America make that would more likely enable us

to be competitive globally than any other? And I think they were surprised to come back after reviewing all of the studies and the literature with the answer: early childhood education.

James Heckman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist at the University of Chicago – hardly known as a hotbed of liberal, soft-headed thinking – has concluded also, looking at the benefits from early childhood, that it alone would narrow the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian children by 50 percent. So we have incredibly strong evidence on our side as to why this is a good investment for a child and for our country.

That's why I have introduced the Ready to Learn Act. I am proposing that the federal government fund states to establish high-quality, early learning initiatives to promote school readiness for four-year olds in their states. We'll invest in the programs that states have already started and create a big incentive for states to start pre-kindergarten programs if they haven't already. We'll take preexisting, voluntary pre-kindergarten programs to the next level by increasing access and quality through targeted grants and loans. Fifteen percent of grant funds will go toward improving quality. We'll devote 25 percent of the funding of grants to schools, child care providers, Head Start, and other community-based organizations.

Finally, I'm proposing that we require states to target four-year-olds who need pre-kindergarten the most and will benefit the most: children from low-income, working families earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty limit; children from limited English households; and children who would not otherwise have formal, early-learning opportunities.

One of the important studies that I think has been done in this area is called *Meaningful Differences*. I wrote about it in *It Takes a Village* because I thought it was information that needed to be as widely dispersed as possible. Over a period of years with a longitudinal study, researchers from the University of Kansas followed children from high-income, middle-income, and low-income families. These were all functioning families, healthy families, families that loved each other and supported each other. Their main difference was income level and education level, which correlates with income level. The researchers literally counted the words between parents and children. They analyzed the interactions at home and outside of home between the children and the adults in their lives. Here is what they found.

High-income families talked a lot to their children, probably more than the children want to here. It's constant talk. It's reading constantly. I used to think that when poor Chelsea was pre-verbal, she was probably thinking, "Oh, no. Here they go again reading to me." But there was so much of a rich atmosphere that was just charging up those brain synapses where all that language was just being laid in, because we know that you have about 50 percent of your vocabulary by the time you're five.

Middle-income, working families didn't talk as a much, but talked. A lot of people in the families and the adults in the families weren't necessarily all that verbal

themselves, but they did have conversations that included the children. It wasn't quite as constant as higher-income families, but it was certainly part of the daily life and interaction in the family.

Lower-income families did not talk as much to their children. There wasn't that give and take. There wasn't the reading. There wasn't the emphasis on building up vocabulary. In fact, often language was used to protect children or to discipline children. "Don't go there. Stop doing that. Don't get in trouble." It was to try to send a message to their children that it was a world where there could be some threats and dangers out there. So language wasn't a rich, involving experience so much as a boundary setting, limiting experience.

And the researchers concluded that the difference in the way the interactions in the family occurred had profound effects on the extent of vocabulary and the comfort with language that children from each of these different family settings acquired by the time they entered school.

I can remember very well working on early childhood going back to my years in Arkansas, even before the HIPPIE program, traveling around the state, and I used to just for conversation – you know, when I'd see a mother with a toddler or with an infant, I would often say, "Well, I bet you're having a wonderful time with your baby and I bet you're talking to your baby." And I can't tell you how many quizzical looks crossed the faces of so many of those mothers. And I remember very well being in Bald Knob, Arkansas, one Saturday in the summer and having a mother say, "Well, why would I talk to her? She can't talk back." This is a mother who loved her child, who cared for her child, who would have died for her child, but did not know the importance of talking to her infant.

So early childhood is not just about a government program. We have to as a nation do a better job of reaching out to parents to help them feel comfortable with the role of being their child's first teacher, equip them through the mass media, through the internet, through one-on-one contacts with the tools so that they can actually implement this. I've seen many cases where an older child didn't go to Head Start or didn't go to HIPPIE or didn't go to one of the programs, but a younger child did, and have a parent tell me how much better their younger child is doing in school and how proud they were.

So I think this is one of those win-win strategies that are rare in public policy. And I appreciate CAP for bringing the focus on it today. I'm delighted to be here with Senator Casey and I look forward to working with all of you to really implement a program that is worthy of our children and our future.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

SEN. ROBERT CASEY (D-PA): Thank you very much. I want to thank Senator Clinton. I think it's obvious from the presentation she knows our studies than our

studiers do. We're grateful for that. John Podesta and the Center for American Progress all were here to make this great Center work. Our panelists, led by Cynthia Brown and Carol Brunson Day and Harriet Dichter and Libby Doggett – we appreciate the contribution that you'll make to this event today. And for so many others who are here, people who have been working on these issues for years and years if not decades, we appreciate the work you've done and the commitment you've made to preschool education and to the life of children across America.

I have to say, listening once again to Senator Clinton and the review she did of all that public policy data – incontrovertible evidence about how important this issue is to the American people, and certainly to anyone who cares very deeply about children – it struck me about her total commitment to this, really laboring in the vineyards, so to speak, of educating, caring for, protecting, and nurturing our children. And we're grateful for that and her work in the Senate, her work in the White House, her work in Arkansas and so many other places in between and among those assignments. So we're grateful for her presence here today and for her commitment to this issue. Thank you very much.

And I've tried as a public official over the last decade in Pennsylvania to be someone who focuses on children in a very intensive way. We had a lot of battles in Pennsylvania that Harriet Dichter can provide more details about. The battles on childcare, about when the state wanted to impose a fee – a co-payment that was astronomically high without any consideration of the family's ability to pay. We fought that battle; a battle to improve Megan's law; a battle to make sure childcare was of a higher quality and more affordable for families.

But I think even beyond the work that we do and the work I've tried to do as a state public official, and now in the United States Senate in the first six months, I think what guides us is not just a set of policies. I think we're guided by much more than that. And I think I've been guided by, and so many people here have been guided by, I think an enduring belief that every child in America – every child – is born with a bright light burning inside them. And it's the bright light, of course, of their potential, whatever that is. We don't know what is. But I feel a real abiding obligation to do everything I can as a public official to keep that bright light burning. And I think that's what brings us together today.

I was thinking earlier today, when John mentioned the fact that I've worked in a volunteer program at a college teaching – Senator Clinton had a chance to meet one of my students last year from all those years ago. But I have to say, thinking about it today, when I was teaching those fifth grade children in the inner city of north Philadelphia, I wonder what their lives would have been like if they had some kind of pre-kindergarten or preschool education – even one year, what that would have meant to those children.

So we have to ask the question: "What if?" And if we have to ask that question for the children of America, I think it speaks volumes about what we must do together across the country to make progress on this issue.

So I wanted to just quickly summarize some of the highlights in my bill, the Prepare Our Kids Act of 2007. A couple of basic highlights: first of all, as Senator Clinton said, it would be a voluntary program that focuses on high quality pre-kindergarten education. And certainly we have to focus on those who are most at risk: those who come from families of 200 percent of the poverty level or below. But it should be, and I think it will be, available to all children of all incomes, as long as you're willing to participate, and some families would pay into it.

But I think that also one of the things that's critically important is that we use a lot of research, as Senator Clinton just outlined – that the curriculum be research-based. And as much as we're focused on the cognitive development of the child, we also have to focus on their social and emotional development. We know that things like learning to share, learning to pay attention, learning to express feelings or work independently, that that's critically important to developing a child, even in addition to the cognitive skills of that child alone.

I think the classroom size is important to make sure they get the kind of attention that they need, the high quality nature of the teaching – teachers should be on the path to getting a Bachelor's degree; that we make it a six-hour day, so to speak, maybe not all six hours learning. Children are not sometimes able to do that, but we've got to make a commitment to a substantial day, a full day. Also, making sure that any program that we put in place for pre-kindergarten education doesn't take money from or doesn't adversely impact other important programs in the whole system, programs that help our children. So we don't want to cut Head Start to fund a program like that.

And we don't want to send a message to governors – because this is really an attempt to incentivize states, some of whom have already taken the lead. The governor of Pennsylvania, Governor Rendell, through Harriet Dichter has taken that lead. But we don't want to make them think that this federal program is going to replace what they're trying to do. If anything, it should be that our bill contemplates a matching program.

So there's a lot to do on this, and I don't want to belabor the details because we can take that in questions, but I really believe that at the end of the day, whatever that day is – this year, next year, or it may take longer, but however long it takes, we've got to get this done for the children of America. And even if there's someone who doesn't focus on the needs of children, if you care about our economy and you care about gross national product many years from now, you should be – and I know everyone here is – committed to doing this, so we can keep that bright light burning in the life of a child.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. PODESTA: Well, we were so impressed by the YouTube debate that we're going to follow YouTube rules, and we're going to take questions from the audience, but I'd like to take questions from the non-press components of the audience first so that we can have some questions from the advocates or from the people who have assembled.

And if I might, I might actually – just because it's so topical, I would just ask you both to comment on one item we didn't talk about, but kids who are sick also can't learn, and right now there's a controversy over the bipartisan SCHIP bill, which the president's threatened to veto, and I wondered whether you might want to comment on that, since it's likely to be before the Senate in the very near future.

SEN. CLINTON: Absolutely. I am very proud to have helped start CHIP when I was first lady, and very gratified by the fact that it does insure nearly six million children, but we have still about nine million who are uninsured, and both the House and the Senate are working to expand our coverage. First of all, we have to reauthorize CHIP by the end of September, so first and foremost we have to keep the existing program going, but we all believe it is important that we try to expand its coverage beyond the nearly six million that it covers now, because John is absolutely right: as everyone of us knows, a child with a physical illness, dental problem, other undiagnosed ailments, behavioral or even mental, is not going to be successful.

And it is just wrong for the president to threaten to veto this effort to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program, so we're going to do everything we can to pass this program, and if he wants to have part of his legacy being vetoing the Children's Health Insurance Program, then we'll try to override the veto, because this is absolutely an imperative. There are lots of examples about how children are not successful in school because they don't have access to quality, affordable healthcare, and I just think it's outrageous and offensive that the president would threaten to veto this legislation.

SEN. CASEY: I reiterate what Senator Clinton said. I really find it hard to accept the fact that once again, the millionaires and the multimillionaires and the billionaires will get their tax cut this year to the tune of tens of billions of dollars just in one year. And what the president has told us is that he apparently he believes that the program is working and it should be reauthorized and should have an increase in funding, but he only wants to give \$5 billion of an increase over five years. So he wants to give \$1 billion a year of an increase for Children's Health Insurance and tens of billions – by one estimate as much as \$100 billion – in tax cuts for wealthy people. I don't understand it and we are not going to accept that because, fortunately, unlike a lot of things on Capitol Hill there is bipartisan agreement on this. And there are a lot of Republican senators who don't understand, even if they're quiet about it, as they sometimes are, they don't understand why the president is taking this position, so I can't say how much, or can't emphasize enough I should say, how critically important this is this year to get this done, to make sure we fund it in a way that makes sense for children but also makes sense for the health of the country.

MR. PODESTA: Okay. Questions from the audience. Right up in the front. Could you please state your name and your organization if you're affiliated with one?

Q: My name is Cecilia Alvarado, and I'm an early childhood teacher/educator at George Mason University, and over the 35 years or so that I've been involved in early childhood and observing teachers both in their classes and in their practicum and their courses, their classes once they're hired as teachers, I see that unless they have a really

clear understanding, both theoretical and practical, about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children that they're serving, that even if they have quality education as a background and they're using good curriculum, they are unable to really meet the needs of those children and those families, if they can't take a standard curriculum and really add this cultural responsiveness that needs to be there. And I'm wondering if either of the bills that you both have, currently address these issues of teacher preparation and competence in this area.

SEN. CLINTON: Our bill does not directly address it, but I think your point is absolutely right, and perhaps we've assumed too much – that obviously cultural sensitivity and understanding of the environment out of which children come is a critical ingredient in the success of the teacher-child interaction, so we'll take that back and we'll look at it. My original idea behind my legislation was to offer it as an amendment to the No Child Left Behind reauthorization discussion which we will begin probably in the fall now, I guess, because I think that No Child Left Behind gives us the chance to really focus on what works and what doesn't work, and what we need to do to supplement the approach toward improving academic performance, and early childhood is a big piece of that. And No Child Left Behind does have provisions about cultural sensitivity, about training for teachers, so because I was originally planning to do this as an amendment, it's not specifically in my bill, but we'll make it explicit so that if we're not successful in reforming No Child Left Behind and not adding this to it, when it's a stand-alone bill, it will have those provisions.

SEN. CASEY: And I'd say as well, briefly, that we'll certainly take that under consideration with regard to our bill. And I think the point that was made earlier by Senator Clinton is important, that a lot of this isn't just having the right program, but you got to encourage parents to be a part of it, and that's something that we've got to emphasize. What we try to do in our bill is to focus, as Senator Clinton does as well, a Bachelor's degree and obviously that's a basic threshold, but if we need to do more than that, I'd certainly be willing to talk about it with you. Thank you.

SEN. CLINTON: And might I just add, if you have any specific ideas, Mildred Otero, who's my education aide, is sitting right there, if you would follow up with her after the event.

SEN. CASEY: And Warner Murray (ph) is right next to her. (Laughter.)

MR. PODESTA: We don't have too much time. Let's take the question from the gentleman right here and then the lady in the back. Maybe we'll just take both questions and then we will give answers.

Q: Senators, my name is Ira Sockowitz. I'm with the Ready to Learn Partnership, current grantee under the federal Ready to Learn Television Act. You both mentioned studies from Dr. Heckman and Fed. Governor Rolnick and there are committees like the Committee on Economic Development, but as myself and many of, I'm sure, my colleagues in this room, when we go out and try to do national outreach programs and bring our good works to others, we're usually reliant on foundations and

philanthropic dollars, yet the case has been increasingly made for corporate America to wake up and invest. How do we, whether through leadership in the Senate like yourselves or the community itself, get more of corporate America on board and see this as a could investment in their own future workforces.

MR. PODESTA: Let me take the question from the woman in the back, and then we'll (off mike).

Q: Hi. My name is Lia Garvin. I'm from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and I was wondering how this bill or other legislation tackles the achievement gap and as regard to test scores and how it starts at the early childhood education level.

SEN. CLINTON: As to the first question, the Business Roundtable has long been a leader in promoting early childhood education. I think the first time I worked with them on this was more than 20 years ago, so there is a lot of business leadership that does see it, and some have made both contributions to early childhood research and educational experiences, and some, as you know, have sponsored programs in their communities. But I agree with you that we need a much broader buy-in from the business community because this is an economic argument we're making as well as one that goes to a moral imperative to help prepare every one of our children. So I look forward to making that case and I certainly would urge you to follow up with the Business Roundtable and some of the other companies that have been on the record supporting early childhood for quite some time, and then we'll work together to see if we can expand that.

With respect to the second question, the closing of the achievement gap requires a number of actions, some of them on the familial level, as we've been discussing: a greater appreciation for the significance of education, a real understanding of what, not just parents but other family members can do to support children who are in school; also a sense of understanding and commitment from the individual child. But early childhood conclusively would help to narrow that achievement gap because, as we said, if you start out behind and you stay behind, you won't catch up.

So as much as we can do to help get a child up to the starting line by kindergarten or 1st grade, we'll keep that child engaged in education, keep that child learning, stave off the sense of failure that often interferes with learning and frankly leads a child to drop out, but I would also add very clearly that healthcare and social supports come along with it.

I've done enough work in this area for enough years to know that if you're suffering from an undiagnosed tooth abscess or you can't see, or you can't hear, or your asthma is so bad that you're missing a lot of school, you're not going to be as successful as you could otherwise be, and certainly if we can provide more support from both the school and the community for families while they are really focusing on the importance of education, that too will send a strong message. So there are multiple priorities here as to how we have to proceed to make children more likely to succeed in school, but I don't

think any of them will work without quality preschool being there to really help kids from disadvantaged backgrounds get the best start.

SEN. CASEY: Thank you for both questions. I think that I would also say that the Business Roundtable in Pennsylvania for a lot of years has made this issue a priority, and I guess I would say I hope that other business leaders move forward on this. There are some who talk about it, but don't do enough to encourage not only their own business or their own corporate community, but public officials. And I would wish some business leaders would put some heat on people in Washington who don't want to make progress on this or don't seem to care about it, but I am ever hopeful they will do that.

I do think states have had a significant degree of success in – I know Pennsylvania has – working with business organizations. That might be – there may be some good models out there; I think Pennsylvania is. Harriet Dichter knows more about the recent fight the state had to get \$75 million committed in the state budget. They won that battle, but I think it wasn't easy.

With regard to the second question, I would say that I would really reiterate everything Senator Clinton said. It's not one program, it's not one strategy. It's a whole menu of things we must do. I do think that pre-kindergarten education and children's health insurance are two of the biggest, if not the biggest, pillars for that kind of foundation. So there's much to do, but we can make a lot more progress on this, if people in Washington who talk about economic development and talk about job growth and the economy are willing to put their money where their mouth is, so to speak, on this issue and invest in this now so that we don't have the adverse consequences that we've been seeing with so many children across America who cannot earn money down the road because they haven't learned it at an early age and haven't been given a shot in terms of their own healthcare.

MR. PODESTA: I just would like to add one word to both senators, which is perhaps the strangest alliance the Center has undertaken is with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on K-12 education, but Cindy and I are both working to see if we can make that a commitment to pre-K as well, and so we're hopeful we'll add some business voices to the support of your legislation on that.

And with that, let me thank both senators for being with us this morning, but more importantly, for their leadership on this critical issue. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SEN. CASEY: Thanks, John. Good to be with you.

SEN. CLINTON: Thank you, John. See you later.

SEN. CASEY: Thanks, Hillary. I'll walk you out.

MR. PODESTA: Let me invite Cindy Brown, who is our leader on education and education reform efforts here at the Center and this distinguished panel up to the podium, and I'm going to turn things over to Cindy.

MS. CYNTHIA BROWN: Welcome everyone. I hope you enjoyed hearing as I did from these two exceptional congressional leaders about their proposals that can make a big difference in the life chances of young children.

Now we turn to three experts who can place these proposals in context and share with us their views of the tremendous potential from these programs. We at the Center certainly hope that these proposals are considered as the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act moves forward.

As we go into our discussion for the next 45 minutes or so, we need to keep in mind the critical roles for the federal government to ensure access for lower-income families to a range of high-quality care and education supports from birth to age five, when universal public education begins. The federal government needs to create incentives for states to develop a comprehensive approach for children from birth to school age. These two pieces of legislation are important pieces of such an approach.

I am now going to briefly introduce each expert. I hope you picked up their full bios. We don't have time for that. They will each speak for five minutes or so and then we will engage in some exchange and open the floor to questions and comments.

Libby Doggett is the executive director of Pre-K Now, where she directs the organization's effort to educate state policymakers, the media and the general public about the potential of pre-K to improve outcomes for young children. I'm sure she's thrilled of this morning's remarks, as we all are.

Harriet Dichter is the deputy secretary of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in the Pennsylvania departments of both Education and Public Welfare – pretty unusual. Her office is part of a new initiative linking the two departments to bolster early education and care for Pennsylvania children.

Carol Brunson Day is the president of the National Black Child Development Institute, and served as the CEO and president of the Council of Professional Recognition from 1985 until 2004. She's been working on these issues in Washington, D.C., for many years, and I'm pleased to have been a colleague of hers during these years.

So we'll start with Libby.

MS. LIBBY DOGGETT: Great. Well, thank you, Cindy, and thanks to both of the senators. I hope you will take our message of thanks home to the office to both of them. It's incredible to have their leadership for young children. I'd also like to thank Cindy and John Podesta for what you all do here at the Center for American Progress to address our nation's problems. You all do wonderful work and I'm pleased to be a part of this panel today.

I'm proud to serve as executive director for Pre-K Now. We're actually funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and some other foundations to lead a movement to secure high-quality pre-K for every three and four-year-old in this country. Our work at Pre-K Now actually builds on the longtime advocacy of a number of people here: John Lombardi, Pat Shroeder, there are a number of others. Their work really paves the way for where we are today, and today is a remarkable moment in which we find ourselves.

We have an unprecedented level of support for pre-K at the state level that is actually now trickled up to the national level. I'm delighted to address how the federal government can begin supplementing the incredible efforts that we're making on the state levels to build high-quality pre-K systems not just for children at risk and not just for four-year-olds. Indeed, the two bills discussed today, "Ready to Learn" and "Prepare All Kids" are part of an unprecedented level of interest in pre-K and young children on Capitol Hill. I'm sure many of you participated and have watched on the web Nancy Pelosi's wonderful summit where she brought researchers and members together so they can actually learn about how important it is to invest early.

We have the Higher Education Act where both the House and the Senate bills have provisions to provide loan forgiveness and other supports for pre-K teachers. Both the Senate and the House bills of the head-start require BA degrees for 50 percent of the head-start teachers which I think will increase the quality and will also help professionalize our field of early childhood. And then Senator Casey alluded to it, there was a joint economic commission, and Harriet was one of the people that testified, that actually brought to members of both the House and the Senate the importance of investing early, so we're at an unprecedented point in our country's history in terms of young children.

Before commenting specifically on the two bills, I want to highlight some of the phenomenal growth in state funded pre-K. Senator Clinton mentioned that we had 29 governors who have mentioned pre-K or early education in their state of the state address, and just three years ago there were 11. We have two (inaudible) from FY08 to FY07, we've increased pre-K funding from \$2.9 billion to \$4.2 billion. That's a 45 percent increase in a difficult time.

So there's been remarkable success. I hope, Harriet, you will talk about the wonderful achievements that you've made in Pennsylvania and I'll leave that to her, but in Senator Clinton's state of New York, we also had an amazing success. The governor, as well as the legislature together put in a \$146 million into pre-K which will offer a pre-K, high-quality pre-K education for 44,000 new children starting this fall. We have Iowa, where Governor Culver and his legislature got together and put in 60 billion over the next four years to provide pre-K in that state for every four-year-old. We had significant increases in North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Louisiana and smaller increases in Alabama and New Mexico, just to name a few.

But even with this incredible growth in state funded pre-K, too many families still do not have access to quality pre-K programs, 11 states provide no pre-K at all, and

according to the National Institute for Early Education Research – we call them NEAR – the per child spending level has declined. States will welcome the federal support as long as the funding is high, and the federal legislation recognizes and builds on state efforts to improve quality, increase access and ensure that every child enters kindergarten prepared.

Both the Prepare All Kids Act and Ready to Learn Act set new benchmarks for federal investment in pre-K. These pieces of legislation draw on 40 years of research, and the best practices at the state level, experiences that have demonstrated the importance of high-quality standards. Both the senators talked about that: BA degrees for teachers, low child staff ratios of one to ten, low class size, no more than 20, research based curriculum, and most importantly, clear reporting instructions to ensure that progress is being made.

Pre-K Now commends the bills and their sponsors for incorporating the strengths of the diverse delivery system already in place in many states, allowing community-based pre-K providers as well as schools to be eligible for federal funding. Each bill has its own strength. The Prepare All Kids Act allows states six years to reach the goal of having a teacher with a BA in every classroom. Pre-K Now believes this is important because teachers that are currently out there need this much time to enable them to get their degrees and the commensurate salary.

The Ready to Learn Act allow states the flexibility to provide comprehensive services, including health screening and referral services, recognizing that all aspects of a young child's development are important and interrelated. Senator Casey's bill has a 10 percent infant/toddler set-aside. We think this is important. It means that programs for our youngest and most vulnerable children will grow as pre-K grows.

Senator Clinton's bill is intended to be a part of the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, an action that Pre-K Now strongly supports and called for last year in testimony before the Aspen Commission NCLB meetings. This bill also places pre-K in the Department of Education making it clear that early learning is in fact a fundamental part of the educational process. We're also delighted to be with Congresswoman Mazie Hirono on a pre-K incentive grant bill to support states in their efforts to improve the quality of state supported pre-K. We expect that will be introduced, and we're hoping that that actually will also be a part of NCLB.

I want to take this opportunity to also highlight a special group of children, one that deserves our attention. At this point neither "Prepare all Kids," nor "Ready to Learn" speaks to the special situations of young children in military families who may be stressed due to the deployment of one or both family members, or left without a pre-K option when their family moves from Florida or Georgia where they have pre-K for all four-year-olds, to Virginia and South Carolina where they have very limited programs. Military families and their children need the consistency and the strong foundation a pre-K education can provide, and providing this must be a national priority.

We're here to applaud these new proposals for our youngest children, but it's important to remember that these are a part of a more comprehensive children's agenda to

ensure every child has a chance to meet their innate potential and to succeed in both school and life.

With this in mind, I just want to touch on a few additional ideas. While it's important to start building a pre-K system for children at risk, we can't stop there. We need pre-K for every three and four-year-old that option. More children need to be covered by CHIP, SCHIP. We heard both senators talk about the interrelationship between health and education. That must happen. The credentials for pre-K teachers must be raised to those commensurate with the K-12 system, but we also need to equal salaries and the benefits to go with it. The pre-K curriculum and services need to be fully aligned with public schools to ensure that the progress made in the pre-K years isn't lost as children enter those first years of school, which are so very important. And finally, head-start and child care funding must be dramatically increased because the success of pre-K is intricately tied to these two important and under-funded programs.

So we look forward to working with both the senators, with Congresswoman Hirono, and others to actually make the legislation we're talking today about a reality.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWN: Thank you.

Harriet, Pennsylvania?

MS. HARRIET DICHTER: Thank you, Cindy. Good morning everyone. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about the issues with everyone today, and I think building on actually some of the themes from Senator Clinton and Senator Casey that we have to approach this work from an understanding that these investments in early childhood are really essential investments in both short and long term competitiveness for the country. Based on our Pennsylvania experience, there are actually three core points I want to share with everyone today.

The first is there is in fact no single silver bullet here, one investment or one program only that works. Preschool is of critical importance and we do need to make it widely available to our children, but it is not the only early childhood program of note, and what matters for all of these programs – and I cannot stress this enough – is a common framework: high standards, accountability and sufficient investment to make a difference.

Second, and this has been a theme already today, the federal government has not been sufficiently proactive in this area and has left way too much for the states to do particularly on financing. And third, we need to have a focus on appropriate and proper public sector governance. This is pretty critical to assuring good outcomes for children and efficient use of the public dollars investment we have.

So first, let me start with my first point here. The quality of our kids' learning experiences before they reach kindergarten is clearly a public responsibility. To advance the early childhood agenda, we do need a continuum of educational services that have to assure both educational benefits and economic benefits to us. This means that we can and should expect both our federal investment and our state investment to common programs with different names and different labels. Child care and pre-Kindergarten are two that easily come to mind.

In Pennsylvania, in fact, we do not focus on just one type of early childhood program. We do insist that all of our programs are organized with certain commonalities: high standards and expectations, good accountability, and sufficient financial and other resources and supports. For example, in Pennsylvania, we recognize that child care is in fact reaching the largest number of young children. To that end we created a very systematic approach for quality improvement. We call it Keystone Stars. It integrates standards, improvement strategies, financial resources and public ratings of our programs. The evaluation of this initiative has shown that Stars has reversed a 10-year decline in childcare quality in the Commonwealth.

But childcare alone clearly is not enough. This year, as you heard, we secured legislative agreement for a new preschool initiative called Pre-K Counts. Now, this investment we feel will have immediate, as well as future, payoffs that will benefit both children immediately and the broader community. Our initial funds will target at risk three and four-year-olds. Both of these programs will use a similar framework of high standards, accountability, and financial supports to get the job done.

So, again, we cannot afford to have a silver bullet approach that focuses on merely one program, one funding stream, but we do have to insist upon that common framework across all of them, so I want to share with you briefly the framework that we use. First, high standards and expectations for program quality articulated – and I cannot stress this enough – in plain language based on research and on experience focused on the bottom line: comprehensive outcomes for kids.

Second, professional preparation and ongoing education of the teachers and the administrators to assure that not only the programs are of good enough quality, but the people running the programs have to have the resources to get the job done. It is not enough from our point of view to tell people to go and achieve high standards and outcomes for children. We need to provide them support and assistance along the way to be able to reach those standards and to maintain them.

Third, accountability for results, a practical way to help people whose work is far outside of early childhood to see and understand what we're doing. So as part of this effort actually in Pennsylvania, we're creating a new tool – we are told that will be the first in the country – to collect information across all of our early childhood system and all of the children they serve in what we're calling an Early Learning Network. This Early Learning Network will tell us the circumstances of the children that we're serving – very important – the outcomes that we're getting for the kids over time that they're

receiving from our investment strategies. And fourth, and I've reiterated this time and time again, financial supports at sufficient levels to get the job done – very critical.

Now, the second point I want to make is the importance of shared and – oh, Cindy did put up on the board. Sorry. I didn't realize it was here. Over here on the board is this little graphic we use for those of you who are visual learners. You can take a look at kind of the elements that we sort of put forward in each of our programs as we're working on systems building for early childhood.

The second point that I want to address is the importance of shared and responsible public investment in these programs. In Pennsylvania, as you've heard, we have been working very hard to improve our state investment in these programs. Now, each year I have to say that as the state administrator of the programs, I am very disappointed with the lack of improved federal investment in early childhood. The established and dedicated funding streams that we have, such as the childcare and development block grant and Head Start, are simply not keeping pace. Broad-based educational streams that can be used on a discretionary basis to support some of our early childhood work such as those under No Child Left Behind are also not keeping pace.

Now, we have moved in our state from providing less than 20 percent of our young children with an opportunity to participate in what we believe is a good, quality program in 2003 to just over 30 percent today. But I want to stress that our work has only been possible because of state commitment and growth of state investment in these programs. This is not the right way to go. All of us reap the benefit when we invest in quality early education that makes it possible for kids to achieve in school and throughout their lives. We do need to see a progress at the federal level in improving our investment.

This means we should stand by the established programs, and that smart proposals, such as the ones that Senator Casey and Senator Clinton have advanced for preschool, should move out of the idea stage and into a funded reality. So the federal role as I see it is to help with financing at a level, again, that makes a difference, and to insist that states do have meaningful standards, appropriate accountability. It is possible to have a national baseline that does not interfere inappropriately with our ability to design and implement good programs at the state and local levels.

This brings me to my third and final point, the importance of organizing programs and resources so that they make sense. Historically, public responsibility for early childhood education programs has been scattered among different agencies and revenue streams, both at the federal level and at the state level. I know that our families do not care what we call the programs we offer to them. Parents and taxpayers do, however, want to have confidence in the responsiveness and quality of the services to their children, and their want to know that they're public investments are made efficiently and that they are well leveraged.

So in our state, we have taken on these issues through our governance structure. My own office combines portions of both of our departments of Education and our Department of Public Welfare. Our Governor Rendell created the office in order to help

us be more efficient, to unify and to integrate the early childhood programs of both agencies. We encompass school-based programs as well as community-based programs. We start with children at birth and we proceed through our supports for a full day kindergarten initiatives. Working across two agencies allows us to use the assets of human services and the educational systems both, and at the same time – important to our work – we have a single staff, a single office, and a very consistent framework to advance the work and get the job done.

Now, the last thing I just want to comment on very briefly are the two bills that were put forward by Senator Clinton and Senator Casey. I think these are smart approaches. Both senators clearly understand that we will not receive the economic or educational impact unless we focus on qualified teachers and understanding that the provider network must embrace schools and the historic community-based programs of childcare and Head Start, small class size and ratios, a sound approach to curriculum, and professional development and supports for the teachers. Senator Clinton I think is right to leave it to the states to determine where the program will be housed. Senator Casey I think is right to focus on a six-hour day, to include children starting at age three, to encourage that infant/toddler set-aside, and to make sure there are provisions around extended day and year services. Central issues, of course, of high standards, high expectations and support to achieve these I think are found in both of these bills.

So again, thank you, Cindy for inviting me to participate today. I look forward to a future celebration with people here at the creation of a robust federal approach to truly support our early learning programs.

MS. BROWN: We'll hold it. (Laughs.)

Carol?

MS. CAROL BRUNSON DAY: Yes. Thank you very much, Cindy. On behalf of the National Black Child Development Institute, I of course would like to congratulate Senators Clinton and Casey for putting forward their bold vision for the future of America's children. They indeed are continuing champions for children. Also, we would like to thank John Podesta and Cindy Brown for extending the invitation to this event. A special thanks as well to my fellow panelist Libby Doggett of Pre-K Now for helping to lead the nation in the "Pre-Kindergarten for All" movement, and to my fellow panelist Harriet Dichter, whose career as a leader in standard setting and positive policy developments in early childhood education is also exemplary.

We've heard this morning about the research. In terms of its clarity on the benefits of pre-kindergarten for children who the National Black Child Development Institute is concerned about, those who start out behind and who stay behind. We believe that, as I think Senator Casey indicated, there's incontrovertible evidence that pre-kindergarten does hold the potential for contributing to closing the gaps and bringing educational equity to all sectors in this country. Not only can children benefit from these programs, but children in under-resourced communities will receive benefits that they are not likely to get elsewhere.

However, children only will receive the lifelong benefits that we're discussing today if the programs are able to achieve quality, and we've heard this from each person who has spoken. It is encouraging that the legislation introduced by both senators holds states to some standard of quality because we too often observe the unfortunate tendency among policymakers sometimes to make bold predictions about program results without regard for how programs are going to achieve their objectives.

We've heard, for example, the economists predicting the potential high return on investing in universal pre-kindergarten, but these economic benefits and educational benefits – the returns – can quickly turn into a net loss if early childhood professionals who are expected to staff the programs are not being produced, nor are reliably stable in real classrooms in real communities. Studies continue to show that the early childhood teaching workforce has the lowest wages and experiences the poorest working conditions within the education sphere. Further, they are neither adequately prepared, nor supported to participate in ongoing professional development that would result in their acquiring the skill to produce the strong learning and developmental outcomes we want in children.

A second example can be illustrated among advocates for education reform who contend that low income and emerging majority children, for them, pre-kindergarten will result in higher test scores, but when the experiences of these children unfold in the grades that follow pre-kindergarten, fail to capitalize on their early learning momentum, their test scores either don't appear – the gains don't appear – or they don't sustain. Universal pre-kindergarten therefore should not only expand access and make a broad general commitment to quality but it must contribute to revolutionizing the way in which this nation invests in the infrastructure of our early childhood education industry to produce quality.

I will briefly touch on three of the key ways that the National Black Child Development Institute believes we can ensure that programs resulting from new legislation can meet our common objectives of closing the achievement gap and bringing educational equity to all children.

First, we must focus energy on developing a national pipeline of teachers who can step in and meet the demands of an expanding early education system. As was pointed out by the question earlier to the senators, qualified, culturally competent teachers represent the centerpiece of a high-quality program. Yet, right here in our nation's capital, two-thirds of the preschool teachers in community centers do not have a BA or an AA degree. And the District of Columbia is not alone here. The vast majority of our nation's early educators currently lack the skills we require for quality programs.

So a national push for universal preschool cannot just mandate qualified teachers. These requirements must be supported by systems of professional development and higher education to ensure we both increase the credentials of the current workforce and encourage a new generation of teachers to enter early education as a profession. In this regard, NBCDI has prepared a brief based on lessons from the state of New Jersey and the (added?) preschools, which calls for mechanisms that produce a supply of qualified

personnel and at the same time maintain a culturally and racially diverse workforce for young children and families.

Second, there must be some provisions made to move towards national standards of quality for early education programs. While critics may charge that this function belongs in the hands of states, I share your view, Harriet, that it is possible to create standards, and that they are important to improving the product of universal pre-kindergarten. Just as we have national regulations regarding the nation's highways, because we don't want people deciding which side of the street they'll drive on, I believe that we should not hesitate to work on some common criteria for what would constitute quality in pre-kindergarten. Without this, the nation's early education industry will remain encumbered by a patchwork of standards that range from extremely high to, I daresay, damaging to children's development. Children in this country should be protected from the negative consequences of such wide variations.

Third, at the very start, as we build pre-kindergarten programs, we must avoid isolating those entities that serve them from the rest of the early childhood grades in order to ensure that the gains of the pre-kindergarten experience continue to accrue. In essence, we must protect against what studies identify as the pre-kindergarten fadeout, or the tendency for early grades to be erased by the time children reach the 4th grade. According to the Foundation for Child Development, a growing body of research indicates that children continue to make gains in schools that connect pre-kindergarten to full day kindergarten and the primary grades, and align standards and curriculum in a coherent pre-K-3 education system. Within such structures, developmental continuity can more easily be maintained, and universal pre-kindergarten is a stepping stone towards a quality pre-K-3 system.

In closing, at the National Black Child Development Institute we work to produce innovative, programmatic policy solutions to ensure educational benefits to all of America's children. Through our constituents, our aim is to support national efforts to expand access to pre-kindergarten among low-income and emerging minority children. We look forward to working with all of you to advance these policy solutions, and ultimately achieve a nation in which every child is guaranteed the chance to succeed in school and in life.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWN: I want to thank the panelists. Without rehearsing, they each covered very important different aspects of this issue. I know we've had you here a long time, so I'm going to open the discussion to questions for those of you who are hanging in there, so we appreciate, if there are questions from any press folks first, we'd be happy to start with you.

Any press? Okay. We'll just open – yes, in the back. And please state your name and where you're from.

Q: Hi. I'm Myra Garcia. I'm with the Hispanic Community Service. Some research has shown that children who do not speak English as a first language should be taught in their first language to prevent losing that connection with their parents who, as Senators Clinton and Casey have stated, are important because they are these children's teachers. What are your positions on this?

MS. BROWN: You want to go first?

MS. DOGGETT: As a Texan who taught a bilingual first grade, I totally agree with you. Actually, my daughter taught in a class where the children had English all morning – this is in pre-K – and Spanish all afternoon and then the next week they actually reversed it, because I really believe and there's recent research out to show that when children are learning two languages, those synapses and what's happening in the brain is actually very, very good for their future development, so we're very much in support of that and we think that pre-K is a wonderful time for children to learn a second language. And you know what? Every child in pre-K is an English language learner because three and four-year-olds are still learning English. So we heartily support what you're asking for.

MS. DAY: Our position is that children should experience cultural continuity in their earliest formal schooling experiences. Cultural continuity provides them the power to continue developing in a consistent way, so we would support that notion that children – the language that children are comfortable and competent with should be the language of instruction.

MS. BROWN: Other questions? Yes.

Q: Eric Karolak with Early Care and Education Consortium, an alliance of more than 7,500 centers that serve about 800,000 children around the country each day. I wonder if you might speak to how the bills are poised to build on, to capitalize on the existing infrastructure of quality programs – Head Start, childcare and so forth – both the facilities and the knowledge and commitment of the workforce that's already present.

MS. BROWN: Harriet, you must be dealing with that in Pennsylvania.

MS. DICHTER: Yes, and Eric, of course, was involved in the advocacy work in Pennsylvania. Actually I think that one of the positives of both of these bills is that they do have good recognition that the early childhood learning system has to be built with a lot of respect for the diversity in the existing provider community, and I think both of them seek to accomplish this by establishing some minimums in terms of state distributional requirements into the provider community. My guess is that there will be further conversation basically around what those minimums mean and whether those marks of I think they're about 25 percent, as I recall, right, in both bills are the right standard or whether that could go higher in terms of what's already out there.

But I actually think that this is a good benefit and very respectful in terms of understanding the history of how it is people have really sought to put together with very thin public resources and appropriate programming for young children, and we'll take advantage of that.

I should add an Eric of course knows this from the piece that we've been working on in Pennsylvania is we designed the Pennsylvania program to be an open competition. Actually, all provider types basically would qualify – competed on the same terms and conditions, and we didn't actually end up with any legislative – we didn't ask for and didn't seek a legislative satisfaction and really were able just to encourage a very diverse pool of schools as well as our Keystone Start and Head Start programs to come forward to seek to participate in the program, and I think that people saw that they were to be treated on equal footing in fact in terms of program design, evaluation, and ability to participate in the initiative.

But I do think this is a pretty critical piece in understanding what is unique about early childhood and then a part of what I unique here is how programs that are pre-existing basically when you start to build a rigorous component on quality that you associate with the pre-K programs, how it is you leverage off your existing baseline of community programs.

MS. BROWN: Okay. Any other questions? Joan? Yes. Wait, wait for the microphone, Joan. (Laughs.)

Q: You're right. It's at least 25 percent, so states would be free to go above that, and in fact we've seen in states where they've put at least some set-aside and they've gone way above that because of the demand from the community-based providers was so significant.

MS. BROWN: Great. Yes?

Q: Dr. Day, picking up on some of the things that you mentioned, the last three years I've been a school administrator and we've had a pre-K program for three and four-year-olds.

MS. BROWN: And where are you from?

Q: Holy Redeemer Catholic School, which is at the corner of New York and New Jersey Avenue. Our population is 98 percent African-American, 2 percent Asian, 92 percent of our students are below the poverty level and 86 of those students are non-Catholic, so we are indeed responding to the needs of the community. And the point is is very (pointedly?) after these youngsters go through, the three and four-year-old program, our test scores have showed significant growth and development in these children. That's number one.

So saying all that, getting to the point – and I know it's a challenge, but there's no question in my mind that we have to come up with national standards as guidelines, and

the question is what kind of efforts are being planned or being made to generate some motion to have standards – national standards – as guidelines so we can focus as school administrators and educators on the progress in each and every child and all the other types of things that you need: the relationships with children, all the work was done at Ferguson, out of Harvard, and so on – all these types of things play together, but the key is we have to have some measurable objectives to chart the progress of our children.

MS. DAY: I would invite the other panelists to contribute. There are – work is being done by the National Association, which is what I am most familiar with to develop consensus among the members of the profession about what high quality really looks like. And the National Association for the Education of Young Children for example has developed a set of standards for – and again, they're voluntary – for the delivery of high-quality early education services for young children. We know that on the federal domain, the Head Start programs have program guidelines which could be looked at as a beginning set of standards that have indeed got some traction at the federal government level. Those are comprehensive and include not only – they include the comprehensive services that have been just touched on briefly here.

MS. DOGGETT: Personally, I don't think the federal government should get involved in standards until they're willing to pony up some money, and when there's money to states to help meet the standards, I think that's perfectly legitimate and I would definitely support that, but at this point, like Harriet said, the federal government is not doing their fair share in early childhood education.

MS. BROWN: I would just add that there's a lot of talk about moving towards this system of voluntary national standards in the K-12 system, as well as pre-K and that these may – I believe will make some – we at the Center are on record supporting the voluntary national standards and education. I believe we will make some progress in that direction, and I think it may help the effort in the early childhood area as well.

MS. DICHTER: I do think this is a big issue, and we went to put together our early childhood, early learning standards and we were very late as a state in doing it so we got the benefit of all the other states that had been ahead of us, but it was unbelievable amounts of work and we actually in our – I think Cindy's aware of this – in our state department of education sort of position statements on NCLB reauthorization, we were right there also in terms of saying that we think that the feds need to do a lot more. This is incredible amounts of work that everyone has to go through state by state right now to do the standard setting, and to be able to do that and really is part of what we are also understanding in terms of the work that we're trying to accomplish, both K-12 and the early childhood work, is that part of this is actually preparing our kids for the international economy that they're in. It's really inefficient use of resources.

So I think this is an important question. You can separate out both the financing issue from it; in other words, use these when you're giving money to help got them implemented and then the intellectual work that goes into just (oodles?) of work, as you know, to create them and creating more models and availability to people so that you don't have to go out there and start from scratch in each and every state and then, as you

know, on the education side drilled that right all the way down in setting after setting. I think it's a big issue that needs a lot more attention and work because ultimately until we get a better coherent national sense on this, I think it's going to be very, very difficult for people to make lots and lots of progress – too much replication of time and energy state by state.

MS. BROWN: Well, on that note, I want to thank the panelists and I want to thank all of you for helping make this a really exciting day. And I think this is a new push for new momentum, I hope, in moving forward federal investments in early care and education. So I hope you all go out and help make this happen, as I'm sure our panelists will. So thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)