

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2009

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiaht
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiaht:

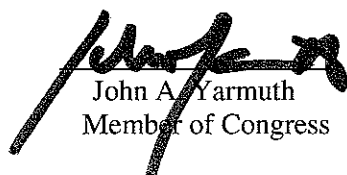
We are writing to urge you to include \$150 million for the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program in the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.


As you know, Even Start is the only federal education program that teaches literacy skills to both parents and children alike. The program provides parents with the skills necessary to teach their children, advance their own education, and improve family relationships. Even Start has helped parents develop basic skills they need to find job training programs or employment, and to help their children enter school ready to learn. Children participating in the Even Start program have made significant learning gains preparing them for success in school.


Nearly half of Even Start families earn less than \$6,000 a year. Ninety-one percent of these families are at or below federal poverty levels and are significantly poorer than Head Start families. In 2006-2007, 90 percent of Even Start parents did not have a high school diploma or GED. Also, it is important to note that 53 percent of the parents served in Even Start programs are English language learners.


Despite state evaluations and data documenting the success of Even Start, funding for the program has diminished by 70 percent over the last five years. Further cuts will only serve to deplete valuable resources in the fight against illiteracy. In these tough economic times, our nation must help families become more educationally and economically secure. Increasing funding for Even Start will help ensure that those most in need continue to gain the necessary language skills to find jobs, achieve economic security, and build successful futures. We, therefore, urge you to provide \$150 million in the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration and continued support for the Even Start program.


Sincerely,

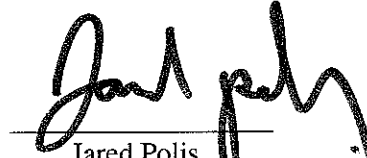

John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress

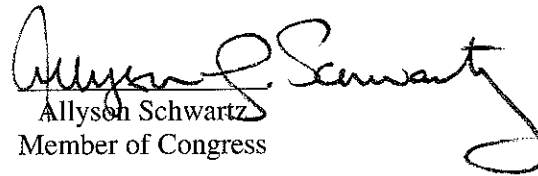

Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress


Rubén E. Hinojosa
Member of Congress


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress


Jared Polis
Member of Congress


Allyson Schwartz
Member of Congress