

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2006

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, and Education  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, and Education  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

As you know, funding for the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program was cut in the fiscal year 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill by 56 percent. This decrease created significant hardships for many Even Start centers throughout the country. Unfortunately, for the fourth consecutive year, the Administration's budget proposal does not include any funding for this program. We are writing to ask that you restore funding back to the 2005 level of \$225 million for Even Start in the fiscal year 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Even Start is the only federal education program that teaches literacy skills to both parents and children alike. Because this program has received substantial funding cuts for the past three years, even more local programs face closure, or a severe decline in services they are able to offer. Even Start provides parents with the skills necessary to teach their children and improve their lives. Eliminating or reducing funding will leave thousands of families without the necessary language skills vital in obtaining a job, thus supporting their families.

The Department of Education cites compelling statistics that show Even Start families are the most in need:

- Even Start serves an estimated 50,000 families nationwide in 1,200 state-administrated projects.
- 84% of Even Start's families are at or below Federal poverty levels.
- Even Start families are significantly poorer than Head Start families. Nearly half of Even Start families have an annual household income of under \$6,000, in comparison to only 13% of Head Start of families.
- 84% of Even Start adults do not have a high school diploma or GED; 44% of Even Start parents do not have above a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education.

Parents participating in Even Start acquire important skills to become their child's first and most important teacher. Nothing can make up for a lack of parental support. The goals of *No Child Left Behind* will not be fully achieved if we leave the parents behind. Over 70 % of Even Start participants are minority families. As such, the program directly helps with NCLB's requirements to close the achievement gap among target populations. Even Start is also a good fit with the Reading First initiative because Even Start serves children ages zero to eight including the most important ages of birth to three years. No other federal education program provides these kinds of services during the early childhood years.

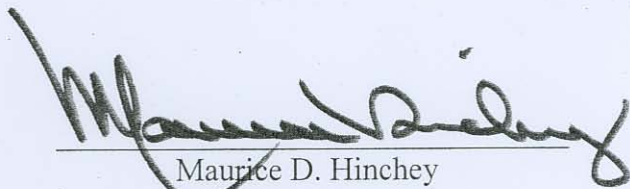
Finally, a Texas A&M University study found that parents who participated in Even Start were more often employed than those parents in the same socio-economic group that had not participated in the program. The study also confirmed that employment jumped from 17% before enrollment to 51% after program completion. Wages increased by more than 25%.

We ask that you join with us to support the restoration of funding for Even Start at \$225 million, equal to the fiscal year 2005 funding level. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,




Todd Russell Platts  
Member of Congress



Maurice D. Hinchey  
Member of Congress



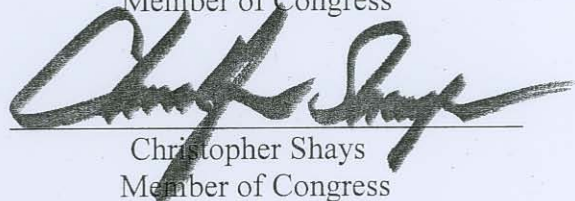
Rob Simmons  
Member of Congress



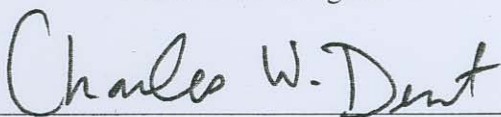
Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



Ruben Hinojosa  
Member of Congress



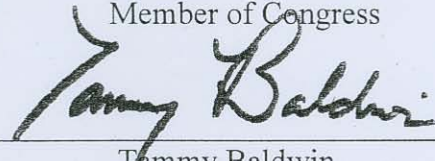
Christopher Shays  
Member of Congress



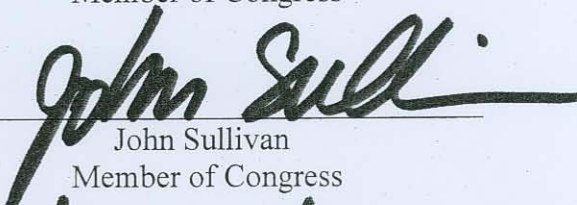
Charles W. Dent  
Member of Congress



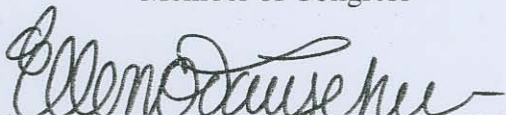
Donald M. Payne  
Member of Congress



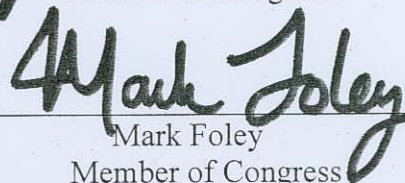
Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress



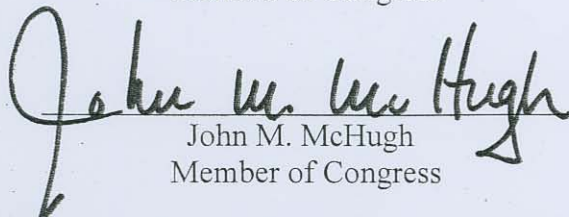
John Sullivan  
Member of Congress



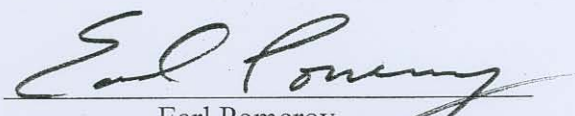
Ellen O. Tauscher  
Member of Congress



Mark Foley  
Member of Congress



John M. McHugh  
Member of Congress



Earl Pomeroy  
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



John R. "Randy" Kuhl Jr.  
Member of Congress

*Tim Holden*

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Member of Congress

*Danny K. Davis*

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Member of Congress

*Major R. Owens*

Major R. Owens  
Member of Congress

*Jim Gerlach*

Jim Gerlach  
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*Tom Osborne*

Tom Osborne  
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*John Conyers Jr.*

John Conyers Jr.  
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*Michael G. Fitzpatrick*

Michael G. Fitzpatrick  
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*Dennis Moore*

Dennis Moore  
Member of Congress

*Silvestre Reyes*

Silvestre Reyes  
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*Henry Cuellar*

Henry Cuellar  
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*Lane Evans*

Lane Evans  
Member of Congress

*Lloyd Doggett*

Lloyd Doggett  
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*Dan Boren*

Dan Boren  
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*Jim Marshall*

Jim Marshall  
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John Lewis  
Member of Congress

*Michael H. Michaud*

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*Lynn C. Woolsey*

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Member of Congress

*James P. McGovern*

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Member of Congress

*Jim Costa*

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

*Julia Carson*

Julia Carson  
Member of Congress

*Carolyn McCarthy*

Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress

*Carolyn B. Maloney*

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

*John B. Larson*

John Larson  
Member of Congress

*Rick Larsen*

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

*Tom Allen*

Thomas H. Allen  
Member of Congress

*Ben Cardin*

Benjamin L. Cardin  
Member of Congress

*Bob Filner*

Bob Filner  
Member of Congress

**Ed Case**

Ed Case  
Member of Congress

*Bob Etheridge*

Bob Etheridge  
Member of Congress

*Neil Abercrombie*

Neil Abercrombie  
Member of Congress

*Stephanie Herseth*

Stephanie Herseth  
Member of Congress

*Sherrod Brown*

Sherrod Brown  
Member of Congress