

# HUNDREDS OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING 36 STATES URGE CONGRESS TO SAVE THE EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

June 30, 2009

Dear Member of Congress,

Children stand a better chance of learning to read if their parents read with them than if they do not. That is the basic, common-sense idea behind the Even Start Family Literacy program authorized under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to ask you to preserve funding for Even Start.

Even Start delivers on a basic concept that is not addressed elsewhere in federal education policy. It integrates early childhood education, adult literacy, adult basic education with parenting education and shared parent-child reading activities into a unified family literacy program.

Even Start is intentionally focused on families much poorer and less educated than most Americans. Nearly half of the families served by Even Start have an annual household income under \$6,000 and about the same number struggle with limited English proficiency. Among newly enrolled Even Start parents, more than 90% did not possess a high school diploma and less than half attended school beyond the ninth grade.

While other federal programs help children learn to read, Even Start is the only literacy program that requires a focus on building the literacy and basic education skills of parents, so they can do their part to make children better readers. Even Start programs teach parents how to read and, if need be, how to speak English so they may read to their children, help with homework, or feel comfortable attending a parent-teacher conference. The program is based on a highly successful model first implemented in Kentucky, which showed that an approach that delivered coordinated supportive services for children and parents delivered better results for both.

In the last several years, Even Start's funding has been cut by more than 75%. This drastic cut in program funding has eliminated services to more than 25,000 of our nation's most at-risk families. Unfortunately, President Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget proposes to eliminate Even Start's funding entirely.

A better approach is to preserve funding for this year, and work to strengthen Even Start in the pending ESEA reauthorization. Parents are a child's first and most consistent teacher. We must not abandon the idea that, by making them better teachers, we can help parents to reinforce and amplify the literacy skills children acquire in school or an early childhood program.

The remaining Even Start programs are showing that positive results can be achieved when you educate families together. Data from the Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy at Penn State University show that when parents received basic adult and parenting education, their children scored better on developmental tests. And, today's Even Start

classrooms showcase innovative practices for boosting the achievement of English language learners (ELLs), who are among the most educationally at-risk children in our nation's schools. For example, an evaluation of California Even Start programs found that 41% of Even Start third-graders, the vast majority of whom are learning English, scored at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the California Achievement Test in reading. These students not only outpaced California ELLs as a whole (15% scored at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile), but also all California students (36%).

The success of these programs can provide valuable lessons for how to modernize Even Start and ensure that it continues to deliver high-quality services that meet today's literacy challenges. We urge you to preserve Even Start funding in the fiscal year 2010 education appropriations legislation - investing in parents and children reading together is vital to the academic success of our most vulnerable young children.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to working with you and other Congressional leaders to implement a new vision for Even Start and family literacy in America.

On behalf of:

Action for Children North Carolina, *Raleigh, NC*

Adelante Mujeres, *Forest Grove, OR*

Adelphi Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Adelphi, MD*

Adult Education & Family Literacy, *Arlington Heights, IL*

Adult R.E.A.D. Program, *Manitowoc, WI*

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., *New York, NY*

All-Aboard Family Literacy Program, *Miami, FL*

Allegheny Intermediate Unit, *Allegheny, PA*

Altoona Area School District Family Literacy Program, Altoona, PA

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, *Bowie, MD*

American Humane Association, *Alexandria, VA*

American Library Association, *Chicago, IL*

ARIN Center for Education, ARIN Intermediate Unit, *Indiana, PA*

Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, *Little Rock, AR*

Austin Learning Academy, *Austin, TX*

Bayard Taylor Library Adult Literacy Program, *Kennett Square, PA*

Belcourt School District #7, *Belcourt, ND*

Beloit Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Beloit, WI*

Bessemer Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Bessemer, AL*

Binghamton University Campus Pre-School, *Binghamton, NY*

Bloomington/Normal Family Literacy Program, *Normal, IL*

Borets Weatherford, *Gillette, WY*

Bowie-Cass Adult Education Cooperative, *Texarkana, TX*

Brushton-Moira Central School, *Brushton, NY*

Californians Together, *Long Beach, CA*

CAMBA, *Brooklyn, NY*

Campbell County Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Gillette, WY*

Campbell County School District #1, *Gillette, WY*

Casper Even Start, *Casper, WY*

Castro Landscaping, *Houston, TX*

Center for Law and Social Policy, *Washington, DC*

Center for Literacy, *Philadelphia, PA*

Centers for Youth and Families, *Little Rock, AR*

Charlevoix Emmet Intermediate School District, *Charlevoix, MI*

Chateaugay Central School, *Chateaugay, NY*

Chester County Even Start, *West Grove, PA*

Child and Family Policy Center, *Des Moines, IA*

Child Care Law Center, *San Francisco, CA*

Children's Consortium, *Syracuse, NY*

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, *Janesville, WI*

Circle for Change, Widener University, *Chester, PA*

Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, Inc., *New York, NY*

College of Teacher Education and Leadership, *Phoenix, AZ*

Columbia County School District, *Lake City, FL*

Commission on Adult Basic Education, *Syracuse, NY*

Communities United, Inc., *Newton, MA*

Community Child Care Council of Santa Clara County, Inc., *San Jose, CA*

Community Women's Education Project, *Philadelphia, PA*

Contra Costa County Office of Education, *Pleasant Hill, CA*

Coordinated Child Care of Pinellas, Inc., *Largo, FL*

Cornelius Elementary School, *Cornelius, OR*

Correctional Education Association, *Elkridge, MD*

Council for Professional Recognition, *Washington, DC*

Deer Park Independent School District, *Pasadena, TX*

Diboll Independent School District Family Education Center, *Diboll, TX*

District 214 Community Education, *Arlington Heights, IL*

Early Childhood Consultancies, *Montclair, NJ*

Eau Clair Community Foundation, *Eau Clair, WI*

Eau Claire Community Foundation Women's Giving Circle, *Eau Claire, WI*

Education and Sexual Assault Services of Northern Adirondack Planned Parenthood, *Malone, NY*

Education Service Network, *Joliet, IL*

Education Service Network, *Morris, IL*

Even Start Association of New York, *New Paltz, NY*

Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Gillette, WY*

Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Ruston, LA*

Even Start Family Literacy Program, San Leandro Adult School, *San Leandro, CA*

Even Start Family Literacy Program, Tompkins Seneca Tioga Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), *Ithaca, NY*

Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Worland, WY*

Even Start at Ingleside Elementary School, *Norfolk, VA*

Even Start Onondaga County Family Literacy Programs, *Syracuse, NY*

Even Start Programs of North Dakota, *Fargo, ND*

Experience Works, *Worland, WY*

Fallsburg JrSr High School, *Fallsburg, NY*

Families 'R Us Resource Center, *Malone, NY*

Family Connection of Easton, Inc., *Easton, PA*

Family Resource Center, *Wakefield, NE*

Family Service Center - Family Literacy Program, West Feliciana Parish Schools, *Francisville, LA* *St.*

Family Tree/Toyota Family Literacy Programs of Mesa Public Schools, *Mesa, AZ*

Fargo Public Schools, *Fargo, ND*

Fargo Cass Public Health Women Infants and Children Program, *Fargo, ND*

Fern Hill Elementary School, *Forest Grove, OR*

First 5 LA, *Alhambra, CA*

First 5 LA, *Los Angeles, CA*

First Focus, *Washington, DC*

Florida First Start, *Largo, FL*

Forest Grove School District, *Forest Grove, OR*

Fort Bend Independent School District, *Sugar Land, TX*

Foster Grandparent Program, *Worland, WY*

Franklin-Essex-Hamilton-Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), *Malone, NY*

Grayson/Westley Family Resource Center, *Westley, CA*

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, *Pittsburgh, PA*

Health Literacy Advancement Associates, *Eau Claire, WI*

Healthy Start Coalition of Pinellas, Inc., *Clearwater, FL*

Herkimer County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), *Herkimer, NY*

Herkimer County Even Start, *Herkimer, NY*

Hispanic American Council of Erie, *Erie, PA*

Hope Public Schools Family Literacy Program, *Hope, AR*

Houston Independent School District, *Houston, TX*

Indianapolis Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Indianapolis, IN*

Indianapolis Public Schools Even Start, *Indianapolis, IN*

Indiantown Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Indiantown, FL*

Insight Center for Community Economic Development, *Oakland, CA*

Institute for Child and Family Health, Inc., *Miami, FL*

International Learning Center, *Milwaukee, WI*

Isaac Title 1 Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Phoenix, AZ*

Jamestown Public School, *Jamestown, ND*

Jamestown Public Schools Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Jamestown, ND*

Janesville Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Janesville, WI*

Jefferson Parish Public School System's Even Start Westbank Family Literacy Center, *Marrero, LA*

Kalamazoo Public Schools Even Start Program, *Kalamazoo, MI*

Kentucky Youth Advocates, *Jeffersontown, KY*

Kingsborough Community College, *Brooklyn, NY*

Lakewood Even Start, *Lakewood, NJ*

League of United Latin American Citizens, *Washington, DC*

Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, Loyola University New Orleans, *New Orleans, LA*

Linking Education to Adults, Adolescents, and Preschoolers LEAAP Center, Clay Community Schools, *Brazil, IN*

Literacy Council of Alaska, *Fairbanks, AK*

Literacy Network, *Madison, WI*

Literacy Volunteers of the Chippewa Valley, *Eau Claire, WI*

Literacy Works, *Chicago, IL*

Little Einstein's Daycare, *Worland, WY*

Little Elm Independent School District Even Start Program, *Little Elm, TX*

Little Tokyo Service Center, *Los Angeles, CA*

Los Angeles County Office of Education, Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN), *Los Angeles, CA*

Lutheran Family Health Centers, *Brooklyn, NY*

Luzerne County Community College, *Nanticoke, PA*

Maine Adult Education Association, *Greenwood, ME*

Maine Children's Alliance, *Augusta, ME*

Mary's Center for Maternal & Child Care, *Washington, DC*

Maternal-Infant Services Network, *Central Valley, NY*

Michigan's Children, *Lansing, MI*

Michigan Even Start Family Literacy Training & Technical Assistance Project, *Flint, MI*

Migrant Legal Action Program, *Washington, DC*

Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services, *Milwaukee, WI*

Morehouse Family Literacy, *Bastrop, LA*

Morehouse Parish School Board, *Bastrop, LA*

Mother's Club Family Learning Center, *Pasadena, CA*

Natchitoches Parish Even Start Family Literacy, *Natchitoches, LA*

National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Washington, DC*

National Black Child Development Institute, *Washington, DC*

National Center for Family Literacy, *Louisville, KY*

National Coalition for Literacy, *Washington, DC*

National Council of Jewish Women, *New York, NY*

National Council of La Raza, *Washington, DC*

National Women's Law Center, *Washington, DC*

NELA Family Literacy Integration Consortium Even Start, *Monroe, LA*

Newberry Family Literacy Program, *Newberry, SC*

New Hope Fellowship, *Tarrytown, NY*

Newman Parish, *Eau Claire, WI*

New Mexico Voices for Children, *Albuquerque, NM*

New Solutions, Educational Consultants, *New York, NY*

NICAA Head Start, *Freeport, IL*

Norfolk Family Literacy Program, *Norfolk, VA*

Northcentral Technical College, *Wausau, WI*

North Dakota State Parent Information Resource Center/Pathfinder Services of North Dakota, Inc., *Minot, ND*

Northampton Community College, *Bethlehem, PA*

Northside Independent School District's CONNECTIONS Program, *San Antonio, TX*

North Valley Career and Technology Center's Even Start Program, *Grafton, ND*

North Valley Caring Services, *North Hills, CA*

Northwest Community Action Programs of Wyoming, Inc. (NOWCAP) Even Start Programs, *Worland, WY*

Nutrition and Health Associates, Inc., Rock County WIC Program, *Janesville, WI*

Office of Evaluation Research (OER) Associates LLC, *Wilmette, IL*

Office of Juvenile Justice, *Baton Rouge, LA*

Onondaga Cortland Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), *Syracuse, NY*

PA Association for Adult Continuing Education, *State College, PA*

Parents for Public Schools, National Organization, *Jackson, MS*

Prekindergarten Active Steps to Success (PASS) Preschool Program, *Freeport, IL*

PathWaysPA, *Holmes, PA*

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, *Harrisburg, PA*

Padres Orgullosos De Estudios y Retos (PODER) Family Literacy Even Start, *Cornelius, OR*

Precious Minds, New Connections of Northside Independent School District, *San Antonio, TX*

Project LEARN - Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, *Richmond, TX*

Project Reach Youth / Lutheran Family Health Centers, *Brooklyn, NY*

ProLiteracy, *Syracuse, NY*

Public Education Network, *Washington, DC*

Raising Readers in Wyoming, *Worland, WY*

Reading Area Community College, *Reading, PA*

Read to Succeed Buffalo-Early Reading First, *Buffalo, NY*

Red Clay Family Literacy, *Wilmington, DE*

Rock-Walworth Comprehensive Family Services, Inc. Head Start, *Beloit, WI*

Salem Family Literacy Program, *Salem, OR*

San Antonio Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Oakland, CA*

San Diego State Family Literacy Even Start Program, *San Diego, CA*

School District of the City of Erie, *Erie, PA*

School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, *Paragould, AR*

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, *Albany, NY*

Scioto County Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE)/Even Start, *Scioto County, OH*

Shawano County Literacy Council, *Shawano, WI*

Shelton Community Service Office, *Shelton, WA*

Skagit County Community Action Agency, *Mount Vernon, WA*

Skagit / Islands Head Start, *Mount Vernon, WA*

Snowline Joint USD Even Start, *Phelan, CA*

Socorro Independent School District, *El Paso, TX*

Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, *Philadelphia, PA*

South Seneca Elementary School, *Interlaken, NY*

Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRC)- Sullivan County BOCES, *Liberty, NY*

Stateline Literacy Council, *Beloit, WI*

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, *Newark, NJ*

St. Croix Valley Literacy, *River Falls, WI*

Success Academy, *Harrisburg, PA*

Sudlersville Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Sudlersville, MD*

Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), *Liberty, NY*

Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Ready and Prepared Program, *Monticello, NY*

Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) Teachers' Association, *Smallwood, NY*

Sullivan County Public Health Services, *Liberty, NY*

Sul Ross Middle School, *San Antonio, TX*

Sunset Park Even Start, *Brooklyn, NY*

Swan Library, *Albion, NY*

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., *Alexandria, VA*

Teaching Strategies, Inc., *Bethesda, MD*

Temple University, College of Education, *Philadelphia, PA*

Texas Family Literacy Organization, *College Station, TX*

Texas State University-San Marcos, *San Marcos, TX*

The Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) of Nassau County, *Nassau County, NY*

The California Kindergarten Association, *Granite Bay, CA*

The CareerNET Center at Grambling State University, *Grambling, LA*

The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, *Miami, FL*

The Family Place, *Washington, DC*

The Giving+Learning Program , *Fargo, ND and Moorhead, MN*

The Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, College of Education, The Pennsylvania State University, *University Park, PA*

The Helping Hands Even Start Program, *San Diego, CA*

The Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin County, Inc., *Malone, NY*

The Learning Center, *Williamsport, PA*

The Literacy Connection, *Janesville, WI*

The National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, *Washington, DC*

The Northeast Louisiana Family Literacy Consortium, *Monroe, LA*

The Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality, *Salem, OR*

The Tarrytown Even Start Family School, *Tarrytown, NY*

Township High School District 214 Community Education, *Arlington Heights, IL*

Union Parish Even Start, *Bernice, LA*

United Independent School District Even Start Family Literacy Program, *Laredo, TX*

United Way of America, *Alexandria, VA*

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, *Eau Claire, WI*

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Departments of Curriculum and Instruction and Foundations of Education, *Eau Claire, WI*

University of Wisconsin-Extension Nutrition Education Program, *Beloit, WI*

Voices for America's Children, *Washington, DC*

Voices for Utah Children, *Salt Lake City, UT*

Voices for Vermont's Children, *Montpelier, VT*

Waltham Partnership for Youth, *Waltham, MA*

Waltham Public Library, *Waltham, MA*

Waltham Public Schools Superintendent, *Waltham, MA*

Warner Library, *Tarrytown, NY*

Wayne Metro Community Action Agency (CAA) Even Start, *Hamtramck, MI*

Wee MAC Early Care and Education Center, *Franklin, TN*

Westbank Even Start Family Literacy Center, *Marrero, LA*

Westchester County Office for Hispanic Affairs, *White Plains, NY*

Western Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs,  
*Chippewa Falls, WI*

Winnebago County Literacy Council, *Oshkosh, WI*

Wisconsin Literacy, *New Auburn, WI*

Wisconsin Literacy, *Racine, WI*

Wisconsin Literacy, Inc., *Madison, WI*

Wise Kids Wise Parents Even Start Program, *Binghamton, NY*

Woodrow Wilson School Even Start Program, *Fargo, ND*

Woonsocket Even Start, *Woonsocket, RI*

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Educational Services/YMCA of Greater New Orleans,  
*New Orleans, LA*

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Technology & Education Center, *Philadelphia, PA*

Zero to Three, *Washington, DC*