



## **Chairman Tom Cole**

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

---

### **Oversight Hearing - Early Childhood Education**

**April 14, 2015**

#### **Opening Statement As Prepared**

---

Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today to the Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education to discuss early childhood education. We are looking forward to hearing your testimonies.

Research shows that quality early childhood education improves children's school readiness. Evaluations of Head Start, state pre-K programs, and model early childhood programs have shown positive impacts on cognitive skills for children entering Kindergarten through the early elementary years. While the research is limited, there is some evidence of long-term positive academic, economic, and social outcomes for some very high-quality programs. These impacts are greatest among children from low-income families, suggesting the potential for early childhood education programs to help close the achievement gap for disadvantaged children.

The availability of early childhood education programs has expanded in recent years, largely led by the states. Currently 40 states and the District of Columbia have at least one publicly-funded state preschool program. About 70 percent of 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool, including 40 percent in publicly-funded programs. About 50 percent of 3-year-olds are in early learning programs, with about 14 percent enrolled in publicly-funded programs. However, the quality of these programs varies widely.

The Federal government has a significant investment in some of these efforts. The Head Start program enrolls nearly one million children from low-income families. The Department of Education provides early intervention services for children with disabilities under age five. More recently, the Department of Education has begun to award competitive grants to states to establish or expand universal preschool programs for children from low- and moderate-income families. It is critical that we look closely at the results of our Federal investment so that we can make wise choices moving forward about how to maximize the effectiveness of limited taxpayer resources in this area.

Today, we look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what works in early childhood education and what barriers exist in providing quality programs for children. We hope to learn more about how we can improve and better target our Federal investment of funds in this area to help the children who can most benefit from these services to receive them. Today I'm pleased to welcome the following witnesses--

- Debra Anderson is the Executive Director of Smart Start Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Foundation. Smart Start Oklahoma is dedicated to improving early childhood policies that support all children being prepared when they enter school. Prior to joining Smart Start, Ms. Anderson was employed by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, providing State level leadership for the Child Guidance program. Ms. Anderson has extensive experience in providing services to young children with communication delays, program planning and administration, and community coalition building.
- Walter S. Gilliam is the Director of The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy and Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology at the Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine. He is on the board of directors for the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and is a fellow at Zero to Three and the National Institute for Early Education Research. Dr. Gilliam's research involves early childhood education and intervention policy analysis, ways to improve the quality of prekindergarten and child care services, the impact of early childhood education programs on children's school readiness, and effective methods for reducing classroom behavior problems and reducing the incidence of preschool expulsion.
- Diana Rauner is the President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a public-private partnership dedicated to advancing program and policy efforts to prepare children for success in school and later in life. Among many other initiatives, in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and other national philanthropies, the Ounce has built the Educare Learning Network from one birth-to-five school on the south side of Chicago to a growing network of schools across the country, and launched the First Five Years Fund, a federally-focused advocacy and communications effort. Ms. Rauner is also the First Lady of Illinois.

I look forward to hearing all of your testimonies.

I would like to yield now to my Ranking Member, the Gentlelady from Connecticut for her opening remarks.

#####