



# Chairman Tom Cole

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

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## **Oversight Hearing: Early Childhood Education**

**March 16, 2017**

### **Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to discuss early childhood education programs in the Department of Health and Human Services. We are looking forward to hearing your testimonies.

Abraham Lincoln said: “Teach the children so it will not be necessary to teach the adults.” Children with strong foundations have the best chance of becoming successful adults. Unfortunately for some families and some communities, pressures in the home or environment can hinder a child’s ability to reach their full potential. Federal investments in early childhood help alleviate these pressures; ensuring children in underserved communities have the same opportunity to succeed as children from more advantaged backgrounds. Our Nation’s future workforce depends on the investments we choose to make in these children today.

Early childhood education programs not only help children socially and cognitively, research has also linked high-quality early childhood programs:

- Savings to K-12 education from lower grade retention,
- Lower rates of special education use,
- Higher high school graduation rates,
- Increased lifetime earnings and consequently increased federal, state, and local tax revenue,
- Reduced cost to the criminal justice system from reductions in crime,
- Reduced child abuse and neglect,
- Improved health and health behaviors, such as lower rates of smoking and substance use, and reduced depression.

High-quality early childhood programs are the starting point to closing the achievement gap. These critical programs, combined with high performing K through 12 schools and college preparation programs like TRIO and Gear Up – can provide the foundation for students to become successful leaders of the next generation.

The availability of early childhood education programs has grown significantly in the past decade, with states leading the efforts. Currently 45 states and the District of Columbia have at least one publicly funded preschool program. In the last school year, state funding for preschool programs totaled nearly \$7 billion. Yet, despite the large increases by states, publically funded preschool programs enroll just 6 out of 10 children. Significantly fewer children are enrolled in

high quality programs, which have the strongest evidence of resulting in positive long-lasting outcomes. Federal investments continue to help support the work being done in states.

The Head Start program enrolls nearly one million children from low-income families. The newly authorized Preschool Development Grants program will soon begin its second grant cycle, awarding competitive grants to states for establishing or expanding preschool programs for children from low- and moderate-income families. Knowing high quality programs yield the greatest return on investment, we must look closely at the results of our Federal investments so that we can make wise choices moving forward about how to maximize the effectiveness of limited taxpayer resources.

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 investments in this area to help the children who can most benefit from the services. Today, I'm pleased to welcome the following witnesses--

Jennifer Garner is an award-winning actress who has enjoyed a successful career at the top of her field in both film and television, and for the past seven years, she has held the position of Artist Ambassador for Save the Children. As an Artist Ambassador, Ms. Garner has advocated on behalf of the organization's work in the United States, traveling to California's Central Valley, Kentucky, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Washington to see the effects of poverty firsthand. I also want to thank Ms. Garner for generously sharing with our associate staff her experiences as Artist Ambassador.

Don Millican serves as Chief Financial Officer of Kaiser-Francis Oil Company, as well as for other interests of George. B. Kaiser. Mr. Millican serves on the board of Tulsa Educare, the Oklahoma Policy Institute and Tulsa Neighborhood Networks. He also serves as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Oklahoma Christian University. Don understands firsthand the value and business sense of building public-private partnerships to improve the lives of children born into poverty.

Dr. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn is a leader in policy-oriented research focusing on family and community influences upon the development of children and youth. She also designs and evaluates interventions aimed at enhancing the lives of children and youth, including home visiting programs for pregnant women and new mothers, early childhood education programs for toddlers and preschoolers, two-generation programs for young children and their parents, and after school programs for older children. The author of over 600 publications, seven books, and 16 edited volumes.

Steven Dow is the Executive Director of Community Action Project (CAP) of Tulsa. In the 20 years he has been leading the agency, it has grown from a small agency with a staff of two and budget of \$165,000 to one with an annual operating budget of \$53 million and a staff of nearly 600. He also serves as one of nine Commissioners overseeing the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

As a reminder to the subcommittee members and our witnesses, we will abide by the five-minute rule so that everyone will have a chance to present their testimony and ask questions. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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