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Matthew E. Melmed

September 15, 2014

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman, Committee on Education and  
the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Rokita  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Early  
Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary  
Education  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Loeb sack  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on  
Early Childhood, Elementary, and  
Secondary Education  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller, Chairman Rokita, and Ranking Member Loeb sack:

ZERO TO THREE appreciates your leadership in forging a bipartisan agreement that will allow the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 to move forward in the House of Representatives and be enacted before the end of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Your efforts will have a positive impact on a program critical not only to working parents but to the 6 million infants and toddlers who currently spend some portion of their days in child care.

I commend you for the attention paid to ensuring the health and safety of young children in child care as well as to improving providers' ability to support positive development of the children in their care. We know from research that the quality of child care—whether excellent or poor—is influential in shaping early brain development.

ZERO TO THREE lauds your inclusion of a statutory funding set-aside specifically directed toward improving the quality of care for infants and toddlers. Creating these targeted resources explicitly recognizes what we have long known: the first three years of life are of critical importance to preparing children for success in school and in life. Many of the infants and toddlers in families receiving child care subsidies are the same ones we speak of having a “word gap” and development undermined by toxic stress. High-quality care can help them overcome these obstacles. The set-aside will be a clear signal to states that quality services for infants and toddlers are an essential part of the early learning continuum needed to prevent children from falling behind long before they reach prekindergarten age.

ZERO TO THREE strongly supports the goals of this legislation to increase oversight, safety assurances, and quality initiatives for child care programs. To help realize the improvements in this bill, and in order to build the early learning system necessary to put our children on the path to school readiness, starting from birth, a greater infusion of resources is needed. As the real purchasing power of child care funding has eroded over the past few years, many fewer children have been served and provider payments have fallen to such levels that, in most states, high-quality care is largely out of reach of families whose children could most benefit.

We urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to fulfill the promise of this bipartisan agreement by making additional investments in child care through both the annual appropriations process and through mandatory funding streams in order to provide stability in meeting the needs of the nation's families today and in the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melmed", followed by a horizontal line.

Matthew Melmed  
Executive Director  
ZERO TO THREE