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## WSA Federal Advocacy Goals 2011

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1. **Increase funding for Head Start and Early Head Start so that programs can maintain the number of children being served.** Current research on Head Start shows that children enrolled in the program are less likely to be involved in crime, less likely to need special educational services, and are more likely to graduate high school and college. WSA is delighted that President Obama and Congress have demonstrated their support for Head Start children and families through the increases in funding contained in the economic recovery package. However, this additional funding, which serves more than 1000 children in Washington, will expire at the end of 2011. We ask that President Obama and Congress provide Head Start with an increase of \$989 million for fiscal year 2011 so that all programs can maintain the number of children and families currently enrolled.
2. **Support increased funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant.** Child care fees are now often the highest or second highest cost in a family budget. In these economic times, it is especially important to help families afford stable child care so parents can get and keep a job. Unfortunately, only about one in seven children eligible for federal child care assistance receives help under the Child Care Development Block Grant. We urge Congress to include a \$1 billion increase in CCDBG so that we do not reduce the number of children currently served by this important program. High quality child care also contributes to children's school readiness: research finds that children from birth through age five in higher quality care score higher on assessments of cognitive skills, language ability, vocabulary, short-term memory and attention than children in lower quality care. CCDBG helps low-income families afford care that can support their children's development.
3. **Provide more flexibility for Head Start programs to meet the in-kind match.** Head Start programs currently must come up with a 20 percent local match. This has become increasingly more challenging as the economy has dried up donations from individuals and businesses and led to state and local funding cutbacks. Furthermore, the Office of Head Start has made it more difficult for already overburdened programs to meet the requirement. WSA is proposing that the Office of Head Start issue a policy clarification and/or guidance that would allow programs more flexibility in what can count towards the match. One starting point would be to once again allow parent transportation to and from the program.
4. **Strengthen early learning within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).** Congress should strengthen ESEA by incorporating early learning components into the legislation. In particular:
  - a) setting aside 25% of Title I funds for early education,
  - b) providing financial incentives for states to offer full day kindergarten in low income districts,
  - c) funding to support better access to intensive health, nutrition, and parent involvement services for low income children enrolled in elementary school, and
  - d) Incentivizing funding to help school districts design preschool through grade three continuums.