

Appendix 14 – Letters of Support from Other Stakeholders

- 1) Governor of Rhode Island
- 2) Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island
- 3) Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives
- 4) President of the Rhode Island Senate
- 5) Rhode Island Congressional Delegation
- 6) Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education
- 7) Mayor of Providence
- 8) President of the Rhode Island Foundation
- 9) President of United Way of Rhode Island
- 10) President of the Community College of Rhode Island
- 11) President of Rhode Island College
- 12) President of the University of Rhode Island
- 13) Director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections
- 14) Executive Minister, Rhode Island State Council of Churches
- 15) Co-Chairs, Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition
- 16) President, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- 17) Executive Director, Rhode Island Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- 18) Senior Program Director, Community Investment Collaborative for Kids
- 19) Executive Director, Rhode Island Campaign for Achievement Now
- 20) Executive Director, Rhode Island Parent Information Network
- 21) Executive Director, Socio-Economic Development Center for Southeast Asians
- 22) Director, Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, Hasbro Children's Hospital
- 23) Superintendent, Providence Public Schools
- 24) Superintendent, Central Falls Public Schools
- 25) Superintendent, Newport Public Schools
- 26) Executive Director, Rhode Island Association of School Principals
- 27) Early Childhood/Special Education Administrator, Providence Public Schools
- 28) Child Outreach Coordinator, Smithfield Public Schools
- 29) Speech/Language Pathologist, South Kingstown Inclusionary Preschool
- 30) Director, University of Rhode Island Child Development Center
- 31) Assistant Professor, Community College of Rhode Island
- 32) Britni DiIorio, TEACH Scholar
- 33) Christine Miguel, TEACH Scholar
- 34) Frances Pepin, TEACH Scholar
- 35) Executive Director, Comprehensive Community Action Program (Head Start Agency)
- 36) Executive Director, CHILD, Inc. (Head Start Agency)
- 37) President & Chief Executive Officer, Children's Friend (Head Start Agency)
- 38) Head Start Director, East Bay Community Action Program (Head Start Agency)

- 39) President, Meeting Street (Early Head Start Agency)
- 40) Chief Executive Officer, South County Community Action (Head Start Agency)
- 41) Chief Executive Officer, Tri-Town Community Action Agency (Head Start Agency)
- 42) Executive Director, Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association (Head Start Agency)
- 43) Director, Rhode Island Head Start Collaboration
- 44) Elected Organizer, SEIU Local District 1199NE
- 45) Executive Director, Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center
- 46) Executive Director, Connecting for Children and Families
- 47) Director, Early Childhood Initiatives, Connecting for Children and Families
- 48) Head Teacher, Child's Play
- 49) Executive Director, Federal Hill House Association
- 50) Executive Director, Heritage Park YMCA
- 51) Director, Early Learning Center, John Hope Settlement House
- 52) Director, Mariposa Center
- 53) Acting Director/Education Coordinator, Pawtucket Day Child Development Center
- 54) CEO & President, Perspectives Corporation
- 55) President/CEO, The Providence Center
- 56) Executive Director, Roger Williams Day Care Center
- 57) Director, Smith Hill Early Childhood Learning Center
- 58) Director, Westbay Children's Services
- 59) President/CEO, Westbay Community Action



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

State House, Room 224
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
401-222-2080

Lincoln D. Chafee
Governor

October 11, 2011

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Review Committee
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Committee Members:

As Governor of the State of Rhode Island, I am pleased to transmit for your consideration the Rhode Island application for a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. We deeply appreciate that the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have established this program to help States build more efficient and effective early learning systems for young children and their families. I hope and anticipate that you will look favorably on our application, and I pledge to you that Rhode Island will move immediately to put into action any Race to the Top funds awarded to us so as to improve the lives of our youngest learners and to improve the future prosperity of our State.

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council, co-chaired by R.I. Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant, and consisting of the directors of the R.I. Department of Health, the R.I. Department of Human Services, and the R.I. Department for Children, Youth, and Families as well as leaders from the philanthropic, higher education, and early childhood communities, has provided leadership and coordination throughout the development of our application. All of our State department directors strongly support the program, plan, and budget contained in this application, as evidenced by the Memorandum of Understanding that is included within this grant application.

I am pleased to inform you that the process for developing the Rhode Island application for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge has benefited from the enthusiastic participation of a wide range of early childhood leaders from across our State. We held two successful public forums, we sponsored two Reading Days to provide an opportunity for the public to read a draft of our application, and we have received more than 50 letters of support, endorsing our plan to improve education for our early learners, including letters of support from our Congressional Delegation, the Speaker of the R.I.

House, the President of the R.I. Senate, the presidents of our public colleges and universities, leaders from philanthropy, and a wide variety of other Rhode Island citizens who are excited about our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application and about the opportunity it provides to increase access to high-quality learning opportunities for our children.

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge is aimed at helping States address the school-readiness gap by developing a unified statewide system of early learning and development to improve access to and to improve the quality of early learning for all children, with a special focus on increasing access for high-needs populations. Research shows that providing this kind of high-quality early education can improve young children's health and social-emotional and cognitive outcomes, can enhance school readiness, and can help close the wide school-readiness gap that exists between children with high needs and their peers at the time they enter kindergarten.

With this goal in mind, we have structured our efforts into four main categories:

- developing high-quality, accountable programs;
- promoting early learning and development outcomes for children;
- building a great early childhood education workforce; and
- measuring outcomes and progress.

This structure will allow us to improve upon existing programs and to create a coordinated, statewide early learning system.

In Rhode Island, we are well on our way toward reform of our entire system of preschool, child care, and prekindergarten education. As you will see in our grant application, some of the main reforms in progress in Rhode Island include:

- improving the quality of our BrightStars program;
- strengthening early learning standards for preschoolers;
- developing learning standards for infants and toddlers;
- expanding access to and the quality of development for early childhood educators; and
- developing a statewide, cross-departmental early learning data system.

A grant from the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge will enable us to continue to move forward rapidly on these initiatives, which affect the lives of all Rhode Islanders.

As Governor, I am working diligently to improve education in Rhode Island. To do so, we must focus our efforts on the education of our youngest students. Success in the early years is the foundation for all that follows.

We submit to you our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application in the hope of earning greatly needed resources and support to expand and accelerate our ongoing work in this vital area. Thank you for this opportunity, and thank you for focusing the nation's attention and resources on the education of our youngest students.

Sincerely,



Lincoln D. Chafee
Governor



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Elizabeth H. Roberts
Lieutenant Governor

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I write to extend my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant application. Both in my current position as Lieutenant Governor and as a former State Senator, I have supported and advocated for the health and well-being of Rhode Island's children.

I have complete faith in the ability of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council to create and implement a state-wide early learning system, and am deeply impressed by the strength of Rhode Island's proposal. Developing high-quality and fully accountable programs, building a strong early childhood educator workforce, and measuring outcomes and progress will help close the achievement gap that exists among many of our state's low-income children.

I enthusiastically support the Council's strategies that have been developed in this application. I believe that these strategies will help us achieve our ultimate goal of providing high-quality early learning opportunities for all of Rhode Island's children, as well as put them on the path of life long success.

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts
State of Rhode Island



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND & PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

ROOM 323, STATE HOUSE

PROVIDENCE

02903

GORDON D. FOX
SPEAKER
401-222-2466

October 12, 2011

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Review Committee
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Committee Members:

As Speaker of the House in the Rhode Island General Assembly, I am pleased to express my strong support for the Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application.

I can assure you that the House of Representatives in the Rhode Island General Assembly is in full accord with the over-arching goal of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge initiative, which is to close achievement gaps that separate students in poverty from their peers through state support for a strong, high-quality system of early-childhood education and by providing increased access to high-quality programs for our children in greatest need.

As our grant application notes, Rhode Island has a long and successful history of cross-agency partnerships to improve the school readiness of young children with high needs, including children who are living in poverty, who have special needs, who are English language learners, and who are vulnerable due to homelessness or involvement in the child-welfare system. We have recently formalized our working partnerships through the establishment of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, which has spearheaded the development of this application and which will work with the heads of all state agencies to ensure that we implement this vital work across the state and that we meet the goals of the Early Learning Challenge.

I was a strong supporter of our successful Race to the Top application, and in fact I traveled with a group of my colleagues to Washington to show our broad-based and whole-hearted support for education reform in Rhode Island. As a Race to the Top winner, Rhode Island is already leading the way toward transforming education. As Speaker of the House of

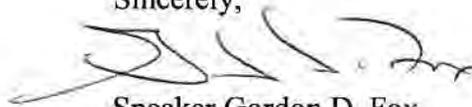
Representatives and as a graduate of the Providence Public Schools, I have been a staunch advocate in support of our Race to the Top initiative and of public education in Rhode Island and I have championed many bills on education reform, including our funding formula for aid to education that provides state aid based on district capacity and student need and the lifting of the cap on the number of charter public schools allowed in Rhode Island. The funding formula passed in the 2010 legislative session, under my leadership, includes a ten-year Pre-K expansion plan.

Over the past two years, Rhode Island has made dramatic progress in ensuring educator excellence, improving all schools, adopting world-class standards and assessments, building user-friendly data systems, and welcoming innovative schools and programs. One of the goals of the Rhode Island strategic plan for transforming education is to “improve the quality and accessibility of early-learning programs” across the state, and I believe that Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Funds will help Rhode Island move rapidly toward meeting that vital goal.

I am confident that Rhode Island educators, community organizations, child-care programs, and state agencies all are prepared to work in partnership to put Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds into action.

I appreciate your careful consideration of the Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. The proposals in this application will help improve the lives of the youngest children in our state and will advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon D. Fox', written in a cursive style.

Speaker Gordon D. Fox

GDF/rad

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

M. TERESA PAIVA WEED
President of the Senate

Room 318 State House
Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

Office: 401-222-6655
Fax: 401-222-2967
Email: sen-palvaweed@rllin.state.ri.us



Senate Chamber

October 12, 2011

Review Committee
Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Review Committee Members:

As President of the State Senate, I am pleased to convey my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application.

The Rhode Island Senate endorses the goals of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge initiative. We have long-supported initiatives aimed at increasing access to high-quality learning and development programs and services so as to ensure that all children enter kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they will need in order to succeed in school.

We have a long history of demonstrating our state's commitment to funding and improving quality child care, which is a critical foundation for the early learning and development of our youngest children. Despite many budget challenges, we increased our investment in our child-care subsidy program steadily from 2000 to 2006, to the point where we were providing more funding for child care, on a percentage basis, than any other state. As funding has leveled off in recent years because of budget deficits, we have maintained and intensified our focus on ensuring the high quality of our child-care programs, through such initiatives as statewide implementation of the BrightStars program and through the creation of our first State Pre-K Pilot Program.

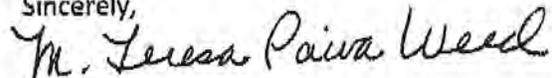
As you know, Rhode Island is proud to be a winner of a Race to the Top grant, and I have been proud to be a strong advocate in the Rhode Island Senate for our public-education system and for our Race to the Top initiative. I traveled to Washington, D.C., twice, as part of a delegation of Rhode Islanders in support of our Race to the Top application. I have also strongly supported legislation to improve public education in Rhode Island, most notably our new funding formula for state aid to education, which bases state aid on student need and district capacity. Within this formula we have created a categorical funding stream for Pre-K. We will work toward the

expansion of Pre-K through the funding formula over the next ten years in accordance with the State's Pre-Kindergarten Ten Year Expansion Plan.

With state leadership and funding from the US DOE Race to the Top, we continue to make progress toward ensuring educator excellence, improving all schools, adopting world-class standards and assessments, building user-friendly data systems, and welcoming innovative schools and programs. As we implement our strategic plans for transforming education, we are committed to the principle that our state agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and Department for Children, Youth, and Families, work together with community partners, institutions of higher education, and early-childhood professionals to strengthen the quality of our early-childhood programs and to improve their governance, operations, and outreach. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Funds will help Rhode Island advance this work and serve as an example of excellence and innovation for other states to emulate.

Thank you for your consideration of the Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. Rhode Island educators, legislators, and community members are committed to advancing student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and improving the lives of all Rhode Island children – particularly our youngest learners.

Sincerely,



M. Teresa Palva Weed
President of the Senate

MTPW/ma

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2011

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Review Committee
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

RE: Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (CFDA Number: 84.412)

Dear Committee Members:

We are writing in strong support of Rhode Island's application for funding under the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge federal competitive grant program. According to the guidance, Rhode Island is eligible for up to \$50 million in grant funds over the next four years.

We are pleased that States have been provided with this opportunity to improve the quality of early-childhood education for our youngest learners with a special focus on increasing the quality of programs for children with high needs. Early childhood education is the foundation for all that follows. Yet many children, particularly children living in poverty and English-language learners, have limited access to high-quality Pre-K, child care and Head Start programs, and they enter kindergarten at a disadvantage. We must rectify this inequity and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge will help the State of Rhode Island take swift and strategic action to do so.

We appreciate the work of Rhode Island's Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Deborah Gist, and Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT in spearheading the development of Rhode Island's proposal. Several core aspects of the Early Learning Challenge are already underway through the efforts of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. This will give the state a significant head start on the formal implementation of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant.

Rhode Island's comprehensive and ambitious application demonstrates the State's commitment and capacity to build a statewide system that raises the quality of early learning and development programs. These programs have the remarkable potential to improve the health, social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for our young children, enhance school readiness, and help close the wide school-readiness gap that exists between children with high needs and their peers at the time they enter kindergarten.

The State of Rhode Island has a proud history of demonstrating its commitment to high quality child care, and Head Start as a critical foundation for the early learning and development of our youngest children. Despite many budget challenges, Rhode Island significantly increased its investment in the child-care subsidy program steadily from 2000 to 2006. As funding declined and then leveled off in recent years because of budget deficits, Rhode Island has maintained and intensified its focus on ensuring the high quality of child-care programs, through such initiatives

as statewide implementation of the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System and through the creation of the high quality Rhode Island Pre-K Program.

Rhode Island also has a long and successful track record of cross-agency partnerships to improve the health and school readiness of young children with high needs, including children who are living in poverty, have special needs, are English-language-learners, or are vulnerable due to homelessness or involvement in the child-welfare system.

As Members of Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation, we strongly support the goals embodied in Rhode Island's application, which has received the enthusiastic support of a broad cross-section of Rhode Island citizens. The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds will help Rhode Island rapidly move this work to the highest level and to serve as an example of excellence and innovation for other states to emulate.

We encourage you to perform a full and fair review of Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application, according to the applicable federal rules and regulations.

Sincerely,



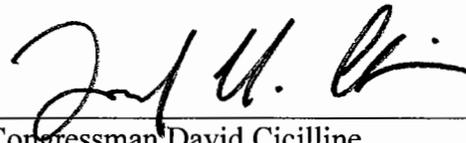
Senator Jack Reed



Senator Sheldon Whitehouse



Congressman James Langevin



Congressman David Cicilline



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

October 6, 2011

George D. Caruolo, Esq.
Chairman

Patrick A. Guida, Esq.
Vice-Chairman

Colleen A. Callahan, Ed.D.
Secretary

Lorne A. Adrain
Carolina B. Bernal
Dr. Robert L. Carothers
Karin Forbes
Mathies J. Santos
Betsy P. Shimberg

Angela Teixeira
Special Assistant

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Review Committee
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Members of the Review Committee,

Because we strongly believe that the quality of education children receive from ages 3 to 5 is a major factor affecting performance in elementary school and beyond, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education has made improving the quality and accessibility of early-childhood education an essential part of our strategic plan for Transforming Education. The actions we have taken in recent years to support early-childhood education in Rhode Island include the approval of comprehensive early-learning standards, support for preschool programs through the BrightStars quality-rating and improvement system, and the establishment and endorsement of first Pre-K Pilot Program in Rhode Island.

Through these initiatives, we have seen steady improvement in the quality of our preschool programs, but we need to bring our work to the next level and we need to greatly expand opportunities for all of our youngest students to attend high-quality preschool. We also must develop sophisticated data metrics to measure success and to hold our preschool providers and ourselves accountable for results.

With this progress as a background and with these goals and objectives in mind, the R.I. Department of Education, in partnership with Rhode Island Kids Count and the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Department for Children, Youth, and Families, is applying for a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. We are grateful that the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have provided this unique opportunity for States. I sincerely believe that Rhode Island is submitting to you one of the strongest applications in the country, and I urge you to approve our proposal and to award Rhode Island an Early Learning Challenge grant.

Aligned with the ongoing, intense work currently under way thanks to our Race to the Top grant, Rhode Island can use an Early Learning Challenge grant to become a national model for the transformation of a *complete* education system, from Pre-K right through grade 12 and beyond. As Chairman of the Rhode Island Board of Regents, I can assure you that we will continue to be aggressive in moving education forward and vigilant in our oversight, as we work together with our many partners across the state to prepare all students, including our youngest learners, for success.

Sincerely,



George D. Caruolo
Chairman



Mayor of Providence

Angel Taveras

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application.

As Mayor of Providence, my vision for education includes that every student will achieve proficiency in reading by the end of third grade. I see the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant as an opportunity that can help achieve this important goal. A strong state wide early education system is essential to ensuring that every child comes to kindergarten prepared to learn and succeed. High quality early learning can help ensure that our children develop strong reading skills by the third grade and close any achievement gaps that exist. I am excited by Rhode Island's specific commitment to developing high-quality programs and outcome measurement strategies, which will allow educators to build upon and improve them moving forward. Importantly, Rhode Island's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant will align with Providence's entry into the Campaign for Grade Level Reading to build a coordinated system of strategies to support improved academic outcomes for children ages 0-8.

As I stated in my inaugural address, increasing access to early learning programs is a top priority of my administration and this initiative will help make that goal a reality.

I continue to support expanding access to early learning in Rhode Island, especially in Providence where a large percentage of our students live in poverty or are English Language Learners. The application's

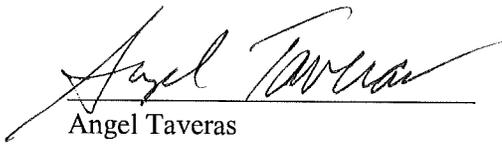
Letter to Deborah Gist and Elizabeth Burke Bryant

October 12, 2011

Page 2 of 2

focus on these high-need students will greatly help the City of Providence and Rhode Island as a whole improve educational opportunities for all children. I give my full and continuing support for this application and the development of high quality, accessible early learning programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angel Taveras", written over a horizontal line.

Angel Taveras

Mayor

The Rhode Island Foundation

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

Neil D. Steinberg

President and CEO

One Union Station, Providence, RI 02903

401 427-4007 ■ nsteinberg@rifoundation.org

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

The Rhode Island Foundation is pleased to voice our strong and enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. As a member of the Early Learning Council and a long-time supporter of high-quality education for all children, we have participated in discussions on the development of the application and its main goals. We are especially excited by the focus on promoting early learning and development outcomes in Rhode Island's application.

We have always been deeply committed to improving outcomes for children in the K-12 education system, and we know that providing high-quality early learning opportunities is essential to reaching that goal. Children who have access to high-quality early education programs, including pre-k score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills. The impact of program quality is even greater for children from low-income families. In Rhode Island, many of those at-risk children are English Language Learners or have developmental disabilities or delays.

Under your leadership, the Rhode Island Early Learning Council is ideally suited to spearhead the implementation of Rhode Island's Early Learning Challenge grant. As Co-Chair of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Steering Committee which is providing leadership and guidance for the implementation of our state's Race to the Top K – 12 award, and as a longtime partner to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, I have seen first-hand your commitment and determination that all of Rhode Island's children, including children living in poverty, should have the opportunity for a

first class education. Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application and plan will provide the solid foundation of strong, high quality early education during the earliest years.

The Early Learning Reform Plan set forth in Rhode Island's application will substantially improve the quality and coordination of Rhode Island's early learning and development system and will ensure that children with high needs have access to high quality programs. As a partner in many initiatives that advance the welfare of Rhode Island's children, we will remain committed to supporting this grant throughout the implementation period and beyond. Our ongoing funding support to Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will continue to support the organization's highly regarded work to promote evidence based early learning opportunities for Rhode Island's young children and its coordination of the work of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. We will also provide ongoing leadership for Rhode Island's ambitious effort to transform education, starting with our youngest citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Muf' or similar, written in a cursive style.

50 Valley Street
Providence, RI 02909
tel 401.444.0600
fax 401.444.0635
www.LIVEUNITEDri.org



October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application.

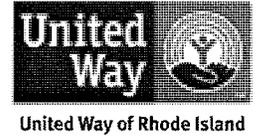
United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI) has always been a strong supporter of high-quality early learning and development opportunities for Rhode Island's children. I am pleased to serve as a member of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council. I am particularly excited about the focus of Rhode Island's application on supporting low-income children, English Language Learners, children with disabilities, and children who are homeless. The strategies outlined in Rhode Island's application will build on the already strong foundation of public-private partnerships that support early learning in our state.

UWRI has made robust, multi-year investments in high-quality early learning programs as well as early learning systems, particularly in developing, with our partners in state agencies and community leaders, BrightStars, the state's highly regarded tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS).

A strong TQRIS is a focal point of Rhode Island's application. BrightStars has achieved considerable success in a few short years of existence, giving star ratings to over 10% of the state's early learning (and school-age) programs. Rhode Island's application has a goal of expanding BrightStars from a voluntary system to a mandatory system linked to state licensing,

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED.™

50 Valley Street
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www.LIVEUNITEDri.org



an ambitious and exciting goal! Currently, all UWRI program grantees are required to apply to BrightStars and receive a star rating. All early learning (and school-age) programs should undergo the process for receiving a star rating to improve their quality and practice for the ultimate benefit of children and families. UWRI will continue its strong support of BrightStars as it moves into becoming a mandatory TQRIS.

Our focus on education is in lockstep with Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application. Therefore, United Way of Rhode Island offers its enthusiastic support for the application. The Early Learning Plan set forth in this application will substantially increase the school readiness of Rhode Island's young children and will advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Maione". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the beginning and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anthony Maione
President and CEO
United Way of Rhode Island

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED.™



COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF RHODE ISLAND

Office of the President

October 11, 2011

Commissioner Deborah Gist
Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chairs, RI Early Learning Council
255 Westminster St.
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Burke Bryant:

As President of the Community College of Rhode Island and Commissioner of Higher Education for the state, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge proposal.

As the only community college in Rhode Island, CCRI serves as the gateway to education to the early childhood workforce in the state. Our early childhood degree program serves hundreds of students on four campuses around the state and through various community-based organizations, and the chair of the Department of Human Services, which houses the early childhood program, is an active participant on several workgroups of the state's Early Learning Council. Recently, CCRI forged a unique partnership with Ready to Learn Providence to provide coursework in Spanish to the state's large Spanish speaking family child care community. This is just one example of how CCRI is reaching out into the community to meet the needs of the incumbent workforce.

As a result of various quality initiatives that have taken root in RI including BrightStars, RI's tiered quality rating and improvement system, new Department of Education standards of approval for pre-k classrooms, and a publicly funded pre-k program, the demand for credentialed teachers has never been higher. CCRI is eager to meet this demand with courses that align with state standards and competencies and faculty members who can demonstrate the highest level of professionalism. We look forward to partnering with state agencies and community organizations to ensure that the early childhood workforce is well equipped to meet the needs of young children.

This is a unique opportunity for Rhode Island to create an early childhood system that can change outcomes for our most vulnerable children. I look forward to working with you and the Early Learning Council to operationalize this vision that is set forth in the proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray M. Di Pasquale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray M. Di Pasquale
President, Community College of Rhode Island and
Commissioner of Higher Education

Knight Campus

400 East Avenue, Warwick, RI 02886-1807 P: 401.825.2188 F: 401.825.2166



**RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE**

October 12, 2011

President

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

As President of Rhode Island College, I oversee all aspects of the College's wide spectrum of academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. RIC enrolls about 9,000 students and has received longstanding acclaim for its performing and fine art series and for its quality teacher preparation. As an educator, I understand the importance of early childhood care and education. The formative infant and toddler years are critical for establishing sound reading and mathematics skills that will impact a child's education for years to come. RIC is the site for the State's STEM Center and is known for its strong literacy programs.

I am a strong supporter of investments in early childhood programs because they lay the groundwork for a solid education and help close the achievement gap among low-income children. Strong early education programs provide all students with meaningful learning opportunities that encourage cognitive, physical and social-emotional development. They have been proven to have lasting impacts in reduced grade retention and special education placement and increased high school graduation rates. The children who participate in these programs are more ready to learn when entering kindergarten and later grades.

I will do all I can to support the implementation of the Early Learning Challenge reform strategies, including raising awareness among key leaders and the general public about the need for increased access to high-quality early learning and development opportunities for children

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and particularly for children with the highest needs and the dividends these investments can return.

I appreciate your careful consideration of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. I believe this is an opportunity to improve the lives of the youngest children in our state and advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come.

RIC looks forward to working with RIDE and KIDS COUNT on these early-learning initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Carriuolo".

Nancy Carriuolo
President, Rhode Island College

David M. Dooley, Ph.D.
President

October 12, 2011

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Review Committee
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Committee Members:

As President of the University of Rhode Island, I am pleased to convey my strong support for the Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application. I appreciate that President Obama and Secretaries Duncan and Sibelius are providing States with this opportunity to significantly improve early learning and development opportunities for young children, with a particular focus on increasing access to high quality early learning opportunities for low income children.

There is significant evidence that access to high quality early childhood education is related to children's success in school and in life. Many children in Rhode Island, however, particularly children living in poverty and English-language learners, have limited access to high quality early childhood programs and, consequently, they enter kindergarten at a disadvantage. The University of Rhode Island is prepared to support the work of the Early Learning Challenge in order to provide all children in Rhode Island with the opportunity to succeed in school.

The University of Rhode Island has an extensive history of demonstrating its commitment to enhancing high quality early childhood care and education in the state. The University houses an early childhood teacher certification program which educates, trains, and prepares for teacher certification many of whom are early childhood teachers who work in a variety of settings throughout the state. At the University, there are two Child Development Centers, one in Kingston and one in Providence, that are the laboratory schools for the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. The Child Development Centers serve as practicum sites for undergraduate students studying to become early childhood teachers. Additionally, the Child Development Centers serve as mentor classrooms for the early childhood workforce throughout the state to learn about high quality early childhood care and education practices.

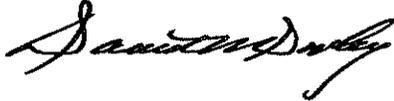
Faculty and staff at the University also serve on many of the statewide committees and boards associated with the early childhood field including the Early Learning Council, the Early Learning Work Group, the BrightStars Advisory Board, the T.E.A.C.H Advisory Board, the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Workgroup, among others. As active participants in many early childhood initiatives, the University is well positioned to continue to collaborate with statewide partners and contribute to the work of the Early Learning Challenge Grant.

The University of Rhode Island is prepared to participate in the work of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. We are uniquely suited to lead the work specifically related to expanding access to higher education to a wider portion of the state's population, to contributing to statewide professional development initiatives, and to ensuring that there is alignment of the higher education early childhood curriculum to the new Workforce Knowledge and Competencies framework. Expanding access to higher education is part of the University's mission, thus closely aligned with the goals of the grant, and URI is eager to welcome new early childhood students.

The University of Rhode Island faculty and staff will continue to serve as professional development providers and mentors for the early childhood workforce. Faculty and staff of the University will maintain the high level of participation, collaboration, and contribution to the work of the state's early childhood community. The School of Education and the Human Development and Family Studies Department will review and align the early childhood curriculum to the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies to ensure that graduates of the URI early childhood program are prepared to provide young children with the education they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. The University is enthusiastic about opportunities to contribute to the improvement of early childhood education.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the Rhode Island Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. As Rhode Island focuses on strengthening early childhood education, the University of Rhode Island will work with community partners, state agencies, other institutions of higher education, and early childhood professionals to advance the knowledge and skills of the early childhood workforce, and to improve outcomes for the high needs children in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Dooley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

David M. Dooley, Ph.D.
President



Department of Corrections

Ashbel T. Wall, II, Director
40 Howard Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

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October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

As the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections I oversee all aspects of the Rhode Island's adult correctional agency, set the policy direction for the department and serve on numerous state and national commissions covering a wide range of topics. Every day, I see adults who have entered the criminal justice system and I find myself considering ways of stemming this tide.

My colleagues and I are well aware that, by the time an offender arrives at our doors, the course of his or her life has been charted by events that occurred previously - - often at the earliest years of life. Some particularly important factors are poverty, lack of stimulation, a poor foundation for educational development, and insufficient family supports. The research shows that children of incarcerated parents are six times as likely as other young people to become adult inmates themselves.

I have learned that birth to age five are critical years for children, a key time for developing critical cognitive, language and socio-emotional skills that help lay the foundation for success in school and life. While our department offers programs intended to strengthen family connections and promote parenting skills, we recognize that these initiatives cannot possibly match the profound impact of strong and focused developmental and educational opportunities at a very young age.

As a result, when I am asked about the best approach to reducing crime, I speak about the importance of investments in early childhood. I am convinced that funds aimed at childhood development and education generate a host of positive societal outcomes: higher educational levels, a better trained workforce, safer and healthier communities and reduced spending on correctional systems. It is particularly gratifying that Rhode Island's application emphasizes supporting low-income children, children with disabilities, English Language Learners, children in the child welfare system, and children of color who reside in Rhode Island's core cities.

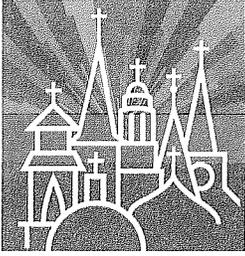
I pledge to enthusiastically promote the implementation of the Early Learning Challenge reform strategies, including raising awareness among key leaders and the general public about the necessity of increased access to high-quality early learning and development opportunities for children - - especially those who are in greatest need.

Thank you for your careful consideration of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. There is no doubt in my mind that our state will take maximum advantage of this opportunity to improve the lives of our youngest children and advance student achievement in the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.T. Wall". The letters are written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Ashbel T. Wall, II
Director



The Rhode Island State
Council of Churches

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The Rev. Dr. Donald C. Anderson,
Executive Minister
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Member Denominations

African Methodist Episcopal Church
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
American Baptist Churches USA
Church of God in Christ
Episcopal Church in the USA
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Religious Society of Friends
Rhode Island Orthodox Clergy Fellowship
Salvation Army
The United Church of Christ
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Methodist Church

Local Members

Church Women United
Council of Nigerian Ministers
Hispanic Ministerial Association of Rhode Island
Ministers' Alliance of Rhode Island
Social Service Churches New England
Universalist Church of Rhode Island

Rhode Island State Council of Churches

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top -Early Learning Challenge application.

The Rhode Island State Council of Churches includes over 300 churches from 13 Protestant and Orthodox denominations. Although we are a diverse group, one of the areas we all share is a concern for the poor and our most vulnerable citizens. Because we are aware of the importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty, we are committed to working with others to bring quality education to all of Rhode Island's children. We are thrilled that the state of Rhode Island plans to increase access to high quality early childhood education for all of Rhode Island's young children. We are especially pleased that it will focus on children who are living in poverty and children from immigrant families, and know that quality early learning programs can help close the kindergarten entry preparation gap often facing children in these vulnerable populations.

As in the past, we are look forward to the opportunity to be advocates in the legislature and the broader community on behalf of the educational needs of Rhode Island's children.

Sincerely,

Reverend Donald Anderson
Rhode Island Council of Churches



October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminister Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

We are writing to express our strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition is a faith-based organization whose mission is to reduce poverty in half by 2020. The Coalition represents community faith-based leaders of virtually all denominations. The Coalition strongly believes that education, particularly beginning at the early childhood age, is crucial to reducing poverty. We have been, and will continue to be advocates at the Statehouse for quality education programs that will benefit our children. Our advocacy efforts focus on the belief that we, the community, are responsible for assisting the most vulnerable in the state. No child should go to bed hungry, homeless and in poor health.

The Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge is a great opportunity to help low income families and families with a disabled child improve their education and also help improve their social skills. More importantly, the challenge holds the community and its providers accountable.

The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition is in complete support of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. We will continue to be strong advocates for increased access to high-quality Early Learning and Development programs for the state's children with high needs. Our advocacy efforts will focus not only on the state level, but at the federal level as well.

Sincerely,



Betsy A Garland

Co-Chair of the RI Interfaith Coalition



Maxine Richman

Co-Chair of the RI Interfaith Coalition

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Rhode Island Chapter

Rhode Island Chapter of the AAP
PO Box 20365
Cranston, RI 02920

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October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

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Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary
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255 Westminster Street
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Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

The RI Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics offers its strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. As long-term partners in policies, programs, and care to assure the healthy development of RI children, pediatricians are committed to the investments proposed to recognize and respond to our neediest children in the preschool years.

The RI Chapter of the AAP has been active in both leadership and delivery of excellence for RI children for many decades. From many decades of work on children's safety, vaccination, and school health, through the development of community child health plans, the Pew Children's Initiative's Child Opportunity Zones, KIDSNET, and Successful Start (the state's Early Childhood Systems Plan), to recent work on parent engagement, universal developmental screening, and medical homes under Rite Care and the ACA, the RIAAP has collaborated on both planning and action for kids.

As pediatricians we recognize that many RI children miss important opportunities for healthy early development, and some are exposed to serious risks or threats to their lifelong success. Both science and common wisdom tell us the early years are a key time for developing important cognitive, language and socio-emotional skills that help lay the foundation for success in school. Therefore, the Rhode Island strategic plan for transforming education has a goal, "improve the quality and accessibility of early-learning programs" across the state. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Funds will help Rhode Island move rapidly toward meeting that vital goal.

Pediatricians are eager to help move this goal and the Early Learning Challenge, to action for the most vulnerable kids in RI. We are also committed to continuing, expanding, and aligning our related work:

- Pediatricians, home visitors, *child care and Head Start* staff are developing a shared system of evidence-based developmental screening, called Watch Me Grow. We will continue and expand the Watch Me Grow plan to train, support, and document early, sustained developmental screening from birth into the school years.
- Pediatricians have long been advocates, designers, and participants in KIDSNET, RI's universal integrated child health data system that captures, tracks, and assures critical preventive and developmental services. KIDSNET supports best practices, assures quality, and allows population-based analysis of gaps and barriers. KIDSNET is a powerful tool to monitor timely and complete attention to vulnerable young children, which will add to both the performance and the evaluation of the Early Learning Challenge in RI.
- RI Pediatricians are practicing as partners with parents in a variety of innovative medical homes. Our Pediatric Practice Enhancement Project uses trained and paid Parent Consultants to add new services and peer support to medical homes for families raising vulnerable kids with complex problems. This is an excellent opportunity to weave that work more closely into families' preparations for the school years.
- The RIAAP has senior Fellows on the Early Learning Council, the Successful Start and LAUNCH Steering Committee, on the Board of RI Kids Count and in numerous other positions of leadership to guide the state's investments in young children's healthy growth, learning, and success. We shall continue those commitments and add this Early Learning Challenge to the work.
- The RIAAP has a long history of advocacy in legislative and executive matters, making our state a pioneer for good children's health policies. The Chapter will continue that tradition, including support for this Early Learning Challenge.

The RI Chapter of the AAP offers enthusiastic support for RI's Early Learning Challenge application. It is a critical opportunity to assure school success for our most vulnerable children, thereby also assuring them longer, healthier, more productive lives, as well. We commend the proposal for full funding, and we are eager to respond to any questions reviewers may have.

Sincerely,



Patricia Flanagan MD FAAP
President



October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

On behalf of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), I am writing to express my support and enthusiasm for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. Rhode Island LISC works to rebuild distressed communities across our state. In our efforts to build strong, resilient communities of choice and opportunity, we recognize that education is an absolutely critical component and that interventions in the earliest years of life are needed to establish the foundations of life-long learning.

The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge offers an opportunity to build on the State's many efforts and initiatives and to strengthen and better coordinate services for young children. All of us at Rhode Island LISC are excited about what this opportunity would mean for the children, families and early learning programs in low income neighborhoods across the state. We are committed to helping make this initiative a great success by continuing to coordinate services at the neighborhood level in order to ensure that resources are maximized and children and families receive the greatest benefit.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Cola, Executive Director

LISC



*Community Investment
Collaborative for Kids*

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. LISC's Community Investment Collaborative for Kids (CICK) is the only national effort focused exclusively on the development of high quality early learning facilities in low-income communities. Through my work in helping to establish LISC's Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund, I came to appreciate Rhode Island's strong commitment to improving the quality and capacity of early learning centers for the state's most disadvantaged young children. I have also been impressed by the State's ability to quickly and nimbly move an agenda forward on behalf of children. Despite Rhode Island's best intentions and visionary goals for young children, the economy has taken a severe toll on the state and I know has impeded much progress in the past few years. This funding would help the state jumpstart many of the quality improvements needed in the early childhood infrastructure, creating higher quality environments in low-income communities.

Should Rhode Island receive Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge program funding, CICK would work in close partnership with our Rhode Island colleagues to ensure that the state's early childhood community has access to the technical resources and assistance they need to improve the quality of their environments, providing a supportive foundation for early learning. I urge you to give every consideration to Rhode Island's compelling application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Gillman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Gillman
Senior Program Director

LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION

501 Seventh Avenue, 7th Floor ■ New York, NY 10018 ■ Phone 212-455-9800 ■ Fax 212-370-9427

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October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
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255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

On behalf of RI-CAN, the Rhode Island Campaign for Achievement Now, I am writing to express our strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

RI-CAN is an education reform policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring all children in our state have access to a great public school. We work to connect the schoolhouse to the State House, educating policymakers and key stakeholders on the importance of enacting student-centered reforms. Through annual campaigns, we advocate for policies that promote flexibility, accountability and choice within our public school system. In our 2011 campaign, we encouraged the RI Department of Education to include a teacher literacy test for reading teachers in certification redesign to ensure those teaching the critical skill of reading to students in elementary grades had the necessary credentials to do so. We are strong supporters of high quality early childhood education and plan to continue advocating for early learning policies in the upcoming year.

Birth to age five are critical years for children, a key time for developing important cognitive, language and socio-emotional skills that help lay the foundation for success in school. For this reason, one of the goals of the Rhode Island strategic plan for transforming education is to "improve the quality and accessibility of early-learning programs" across the state, and we believe that Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Funds will help Rhode Island move rapidly toward meeting that vital goal.

RI-CAN is committed to being a strong advocacy voice for key initiatives laid out in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application, including:

- o Advocating for increased access to high-quality Early Learning and Development programs for Rhode Island's Children with High Needs (low-income, English Language Learners, children with developmental delays/disabilities, children in the Child Welfare system, children who are homeless).

- Supporting a new statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Supporting the new Early Learning Data System and its importance to support connections between early childhood providers and Pre-K/K-12 schools.

We offer our enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. Rhode Island's Early Learning Plan set forth in this application will substantially increase the school readiness of Rhode Island's young children and will advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maryellen Butke".

Maryellen Butke
Executive Director



1210 Pontiac Avenue

Cranston, Rhode Island 02920

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VISIT www.ripin.org

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant

Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council

Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

One Union Station

Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I am writing to express my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application.

Founded in 1991, RIPIN is a statewide non-profit organization with a collective programmatic reach that extends to all communities in RI. We have a daily presence in schools, pediatric practices/clinics, hospitals, medical specialty clinics, other health/medical facilities, community organizations, and RI Department of Health programs. As Rhode Island's "family engagement specialists" we provide information, support, training, and empowering experiences that help parents, families, individuals (including children, youth, and young adults) to be effective advocates for their health, education, and socio-economic stability. We offer 18 programs and services and serve more than 65,000 Rhode Islanders each year.

We are pleased to read the comprehensive plans for engaging families of young children. Specifically, *Fun Family Activities for Preschoolers* has supported parents as they work with their children at home to prepare them for kindergarten entry. The plan to expand capacity to reach more families as well as including families with children birth to age 3 is very encouraging.

The Rhode Island Parent Information Network fully endorses this application as a means to coordinate a comprehensive plan for Rhode Island families with very young children. We are

fully committed to working with the Rhode Island Early Learning Council to ensure the success of this initiative and hope that this application receives a favorable review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew B. Cox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Matthew B. Cox
Executive Director



Socio-Economic Development Center for Southeast Asians (SEDC-SEA)

**Main Office ▪ 270 Elmwood Avenue ▪ Providence, Rhode Island 02907
Phone: 401.274.8811 ▪ Fax: 401.274.8877**

**Branch Office ▪ 727 Front Street, Suite 110 ▪ Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895
Phone: 401.762.0343 ▪ Fax: 401.762.1459**

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
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255 Westminster Street
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Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Director Bryant:

I am pleased to offer my support for the Rhode Island's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application that is being proposed by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE). I believe RIDE's experience and track record to establish a comprehensive and coherent early learning and development system increases the quality of early learning and development programs for all children statewide.

I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate and support the values and principles behind the initiative to create quality education opportunities for all the SEA communities in the State. The Socio-Economic Development Center for Southeast Asians (SEDC-SEA) will work with stakeholders to assure that the voices from the SEA community are heard and will guide the Department in which direction best fits the community.

Rhode Island is home to more than 20,000 refugees from Southeast Asia. They come mostly from Cambodia, Laos, Hmong and Vietnam. There is a statewide non-profit providing a hub of social services with an office in South Providence and a satellite office in Woonsocket; the two areas with the highest concentration of Southeast Asian residents. SEDC-SEA is regarded by Southeast Asian communities as their primary support system for help in navigating state's governmental, healthcare, human services, legal and financial services system.

SEDC-SEA provides comprehensive services and programs ranging from social services for adults and families, to providing academic enrichment programs via summer and after-school activities and basic needs with the on-site Meals on Wheels program and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). In addition, SEDC-SEA supports self-sustaining programs such as the Language Bank, a fee-for-service program that provides interpretation and translation services in over 40 languages and education through ESL, GED and Citizenship classes.

Sincerely,

Channavy Chhay, Executive Director



October 11, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
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Department of Pediatrics

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Pamela C. High, MD
Director
Developmental-Behavioral
Pediatrics
Hasbro Children's Hospital
Professor of Pediatrics
(Clinical)
Brown Medical School

Dear Superintendent Gist and Ms. Bryant:

I write to offer my enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's *Race to the Top* Early Challenge Grant Proposal. I was appointed as a member of Rhode Island's Early Learning Council at its inception more than a year ago and I have also been a member of Rhode Island's Early Childhood Systems' Successful Start Steering Committee for the past 4 years. In these roles, I have watched the momentum toward improving quality of and access to early childhood education build and grow exponentially in our state. It is essential that we support the healthy growth and development of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens by investing in their education and care during their early and most formative years. Implementation of our *Race to the Top* state plan could be our state's next big step in helping us achieve our goal of having every child in Rhode Island enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

As a pediatrician, I am particularly excited about key components of this plan which will connect young children's health and development, as it is addressed within the medical home, with their early learning, at home, in care and at school. In particular, two elements of this proposal support these linkages: 1) funding for development of an integrated data system building on *Kidsnet*, our statewide health data system which contains child specific information on newborn metabolic and psychosocial screening, immunizations, home visitation, lead screening and early intervention participation, with data from the newly developed Rhode Island Early Learning Data System containing data on a child's participation and developmental progression in early learning environments, and 2) the provision of support to primary care medical homes for evidence based interventions that support child development.



Department of Pediatrics

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Pamela C. High, MD
Director
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Pediatrics
Hasbro Children's Hospital
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(Clinical)
Brown Medical School

The first of these elements will allow pediatricians, child care providers and parents to track children's progress and communicate in a unified way. Also, with the support of *Race to the Top*, we will be able to expand developmental and behavioral screening in pediatric practice and in child care in Rhode Island through expansion of *Watch Me Grow*. By adding developmental screening to this integrated dataset, Rhode Island will be able to identify children with developmental concerns early and address their needs through timely provision of specialized services, which we know is the most effective and efficient way to impact their learning and life course.

Should Rhode Island receive *Race to the Top* support, I will do all that I can to assure success of this plan. As a member of the Early Learning Council, I will be most pleased to provide advice and oversight to the development of Rhode Island's *Race to the Top* Early Learning Challenge Plan. As a member of the Successful Start Steering Committee, I will continue to participate in the development and expansion of *Help Me Grow* Rhode Island. As a member of the executive committee of Rhode Island's AAP chapter, I will encourage fellow pediatricians who serve high needs young children and families to work with *Help Me Grow* to integrate into their practices evidence-based developmental and behavioral pediatric screenings with timely early referrals to community based resources. I will also work to educate our pediatric workforce on the value of our enhanced quality rating system for early education and care and our new statewide Kindergarten entry assessment. As a member of Rhode Island Reach Out and Read's Board of Directors, I will help spread evidence-based early literacy promotion throughout our state.

Rhode Island's Early Learning Plan set forth in this application will substantially increase the school readiness of Rhode Island's young children and will advance student achievement in Rhode Island for many years to come. I endorse and support it wholeheartedly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela C. High". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pamela C. High, MD
Director, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Hasbro Children's/ RI Hospital
Professor of Pediatrics (Clinical)
The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University

ANGEL TAVERAS
Mayor

SUSAN F. LUSI, PH.D.
Superintendent



Providence Public School District
Office of the Superintendent
797 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903-4045
tel. 401.456.9211
fax 401.456.9252

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

On behalf of the Providence Schools, I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application. As an educator, I understand how important early learning opportunities are to reducing the achievement gap. I am fully committed to ensuring that every child in Rhode Island gets a high-quality education.

Equal access to high-quality early learning opportunities is the first step to making sure that every child has a chance to succeed in school. The Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge has a particular focus on expanding access for high-needs populations, including children living in poverty and English language learners. This focus is especially relevant to Providence, where 42.5% of children under age 6 live in poverty and 16% of the district's students are English Language Learners. This grant will help our state address the needs of those children by providing them with high-quality learning opportunities.

As Superintendent of Rhode Island's largest school district, I passionately support the goals and strategies expressed in this application and its potential to improve the lives and education of Rhode Island's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan F. Lusi".

Susan F. Lusi, Ph.D.
Superintendent



21 Hedley Avenue • Central Falls, RI 02863 • Telephone: 401.727.7700 • Fax: 401.727.7722

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

As Superintendent of Central Falls Schools, I am pleased to offer my strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application. As an educator, I am fully committed to ensuring that every child in Rhode Island gets a high-quality education. Equal access to high-quality early learning opportunities is the first step to making sure that every child has a chance to succeed in school. The Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge's particular focus on expanding access for high-needs populations, such as children living in poverty and English Language Learners, is especially relevant to Central Falls and will ensure that our children have a strong educational foundation. This grant will help our state address the needs of those children by providing them with high-quality learning opportunities and bridge the preparation gap often seen when children from low-income communities like ours enter kindergarten.

As Superintendent of the Central Falls school district, I passionately support the goals and strategies expressed in this application and its potential to improve the lives and education of our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frances Gallo".

Frances Gallo
Superintendent of Schools



NEWPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

John H. Ambrogi, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

15 Wickham Road • Newport, Rhode Island 02840-4232
Tel 401.847.2100 ext. 212 • Fax 401.849.0170 • johnambrogi@newportriscschools.org

October 12, 2011

Ms. Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Ms. Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

As Superintendent of Newport Public Schools, I am pleased to offer my full support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Application. As an educator, I am fully committed to ensuring that every child in Rhode Island gets a superior education.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that all children have equal access to high-quality early learning opportunities. That is the first crucial step to making sure that every child has a chance to succeed in school. The Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge particularly focuses on expanding access for high-needs populations, such as children living in poverty, is especially relevant to Newport, and will ensure that our children begin kindergarten on a level playing field. This grant will help our state address the needs of those children by providing them with appropriate learning opportunities and bridge the preparation gap often seen when children enter kindergarten.

I am in support of the goals and strategies expressed in this application and its potential to improve the lives and education of our children.

If there is anything I can do to assist you in securing this important opportunity for our students, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John H. Ambrogi, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JHA:wjg

Providing Quality Education That Makes A Difference In Each Student's Life

October 12, 2011

Deborah Gist
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

Elizabeth Burke Bryant
Co-Chair, Rhode Island Early Learning Council
Executive Director, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
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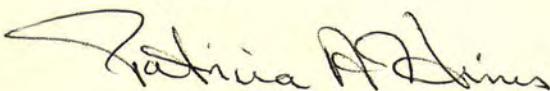
Dear Commissioner Gist and Ms. Bryant:

On behalf of the members of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP), I am writing to convey our strong support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application. Principals note that early learning/or the lack thereof is a key indicator of how well students will achieve throughout their years in school. As the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) asserts, "The impact of high-quality early learning experiences is well established, particularly for children at risk for underachievement."

Birth to age five are critical years for children, a key time for developing important cognitive, language and socio-emotional skills that help lay the foundation for success in school. For this reason, one of the goals of the Rhode Island strategic plan for transforming education is to "improve the quality and accessibility of early-learning programs" across the state, and the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Funds will help Rhode Island move rapidly toward meeting that vital goal. Different from other states that have mandatory pre-kindergarten programs with all of the supports inherent in them, Rhode Island is hampered by the fact that too many children enter kindergarten not yet ready to learn.

RIASP members support all steps to increase access to high-quality early learning. We offer our enthusiastic support for Rhode Island's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge application. Rhode Island's Early Learning Plan set forth in this application will substantially increase the school readiness of Rhode Island's young children and will advance student achievement throughout their years in school.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Hines
Executive Director, RIASP