



Ohio House Special Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education Funding

Statement of

Dr. Nichole M. Booker
Director of Planning & Evaluation
Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.
55 E. Mill Street, Akron, Ohio 44308

Submitted for the record

Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education Funding

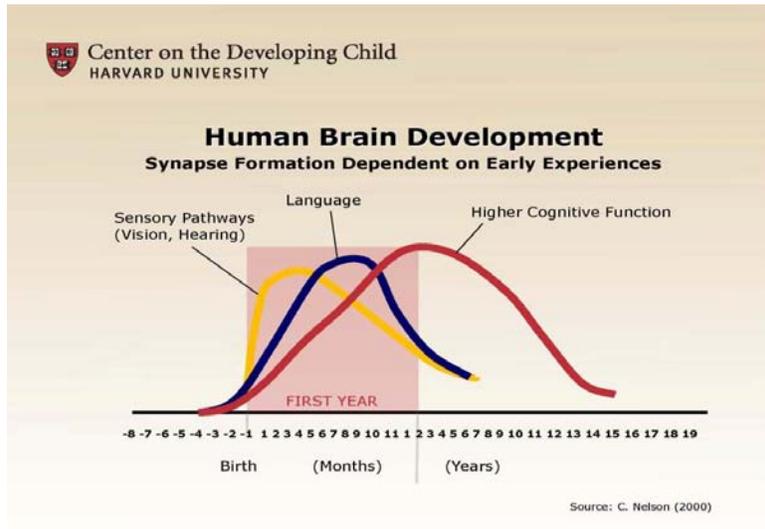
August 22, 2012

Chairman Amstutz, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sykes, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to submit the following statement for the record of the legislative hearing on August 22, 2012 here in Akron. My name is Nichole Booker, Director of Planning & Evaluation at Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. (ASCA). My academic studies in the areas of Sociology, Public Administration and Applied Policy drove me to the non-profit arena where I have mainly put my skills to use in researching community needs and analyzing policy and systemic issues as it relates to addressing those needs. I also have background and experience in conducting program evaluations for social programs.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of ASCA, Summit County Head Start (ASCA has been the grantee for Summit County Head Start since 1965), and in support of increased funding related to K-12 education and early childhood education. Each year, ASCA Summit County Head Start serves over 1,600 children ages 0-5 through Early Head Start (0-3 year olds) and Head Start (3-5 year olds); 90% of which fall below the poverty guidelines and between 10%-20% of which are children with diagnosed disabilities and/or special needs.

I am here to offer some insight into why quality early childhood education is vital to ensure children have the very best foundation upon which to start kindergarten and to essentially succeed. The most important, yet underrated, fact related to understanding why funding and supporting early childhood education is so critical is simple: the first several years of a child's life are the most vital in terms of learning and development, which if fostered in a quality learning environment, could have a dramatic difference in the life of a child that we hope will one day grow-up to be a highly functioning, contributing member of society.



Let me start with some facts about Head Start and other early childhood education projects and studies that drive home the understanding and data needed to understand that quality early childhood education works!

- Nationally, Head Start launched the HS Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) in 1997. FACES is an ongoing longitudinal study of the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of HS children at enrollment, after 1-2 years of HS, and followed up at the end of K or 1st grade.
 - Findings from FACES demonstrate that although children begin HS with a great disadvantage compared to non-poor children, HS narrows the gap between disadvantaged students and all other children and their families in numerous ways:
 - HS has shown to enhance children’s development and school readiness
 - HS has shown to strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
 - HS has shown to provide children with high quality child development services
- A meta-analysis of reliable studies revealed that HS children have increased achievement test scores and favorable long-term effects on grade repetition, special education, and high school graduation rates (Barnett 2002; Ludwig & Miller 2007).
- The infamous HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40 (2005), conducted from 1962-1967 where 3-4 year old children in poverty and at risk of school failure, were randomly divided into a group receiving high-quality preschool education and a control group who received no intervention. At age 40, those that received quality early childhood education programming had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have that early childhood education experience.
- According to a study by the Ohio Department of Education on economic impact of early care and education (part of a project stemming from the National Economic Development and Law Center), investments in this area of early childhood education:
 - **Enables parents to be part of Ohio’s workforce and upgrade their skills**

One (1) in four (4) workers in Ohio have a child living in a household where all parents work, however, the average cost of center-based early care and education for an infant makes up more than 31% of the median income for a retail salesperson in Ohio, making early childhood education unaffordable to many families and preventing many parents from working or attending school. With high demand for highly-skilled professional employees, affordable quality early care and education is one essential tool to filling these jobs and increasing self-

sufficiency. Strengthening early education benefits, enables workforce development; parents are able to attend educational programs, which in the end, benefit the Ohio economy.

- **Supports employee productivity in Ohio industries**

On average, unscheduled absences cost small businesses and large companies an about \$60,000 and \$3.6 million a year, respectively. Almost 1/3 of unscheduled absences are due to family issues, including early care and education needs. Quality, accessible early care and education is a critical component of Ohio's quality of life, attracting businesses and young professionals to the state.

- **Helps prepare young children for opportunities in the new economy**

Young children in high-quality early childhood education settings show greater language development, mathematical ability, thinking and attention skills, and fewer behavior problems in kindergarten.

- **Provides a positive rate of return on investments**

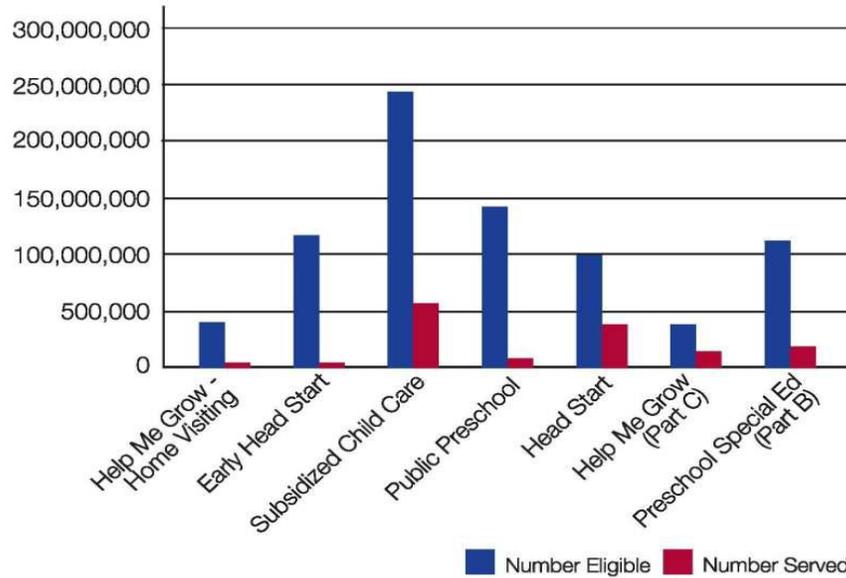
Long-term studies show that quality early education programs, particularly for low-income children, decrease the following future negative outcomes: likelihood of special education enrollment, juvenile delinquency, adult incarceration, and welfare participation. This increases the quality of life for all citizens and reduces government spending.

- Rolnick & Grunewals (2007) in an economic impact analysis of the Perry Study, estimated a societal return on investment to be 16% (Benefit-Cost Ratio = \$16 to \$1; Annual Rate of Return = 18%; Public Rate of Return = 16%). Considered in that analysis were outcomes from the study which concluded children in early childhood education programming were more likely to be literate by 6th grade, graduate high school, get a job, pay taxes, stay off welfare, and crime rates were 50% lower than for those of the control group.
- Results of a randomized longitudinal study of over 600 HS graduates in California found that society receives nearly \$9 in benefits for every \$1 invested into Head Start children – these benefits include: increased earnings, employment, family stability, decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education.
- A study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (Art Rolnick & Rob Grunewals, 2003) demonstrated that investments in high-quality early education yield a high public return in terms of lower educational costs, crime rates, and social service expenses. The study also found that the highest returns came from investments in at-risk children.

Now that we have outlined the fact that quality early childhood education works, and we have established that quality early childhood education has a significant return on investment, let me present just a few pieces of information related to current early childhood education programming in Ohio, school readiness assessment scores, and children with special needs.

- According to The Center for Community Solutions, *Leaving Young Children Behind: A Lost Opportunity for School and Workforce Success* (2012), while Ohio provides early care and education opportunities through various resources (public preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, preschool special education, etc.), current investments in early childhood programs serve only a small percentage of high-needs children (i.e., low-income, special needs/disabilities, etc.). Weighing the impact that early childhood education has on individual children and the overall rates of return-on-investment for the community, the need for an increased focus on supporting quality early education initiatives is clear.

Children Served in Ohio's Early Childhood Programs vs. Number of Children Eligible Birth to Kindergarten Entry¹



- Also according to The Center for Community Solutions (2012), “A comparison of Ohio’s kindergarten readiness assessment and third grade reading scores shows the consequences of Ohio’s readiness gap...
 - Ohio’s Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for Literacy (KRAL) test administered to all incoming kindergarteners shows that only [50%] of higher income students are ready for kindergarten as evidenced by testing in the highest KRAL ‘band’, while only [25%] of low-income students are reaching that benchmark”. In Akron for 2010-2011, only 35% of students tested in the highest KRAL band fully prepared for kindergarten; almost 25% of students tested in the lowest ‘band’ on the KRAL assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2010-2011 KRAL Scores, Akron Public).
 - “Data also shows the lasting effects of Ohio’s readiness gap with, with children scoring in the lowest ‘band’ of readiness on the KRAL assessment testing below reading proficiency in third grade. Based on this...it is clear that if Ohio is to be successful in significantly increasing the success of Ohio’s students, we must first address the school readiness gap causes by decrease access to high-quality early care and education” (The Center for Community Solutions, 2012; Data from ODE; Figures based on children tested in Band 3 of the KRAL test, by year).
- A large proportion of children with disabilities and other special needs are low-income (16% of low-income families have a child with a disability – nearly 50% higher than the rate among higher-income families). According to the Children’s Defense Fund, research shows that providing supports to children with disabilities and other special needs in their early years reduces their need for special education and other supports later in life.
 - Because many children with special needs go undetected or undiagnosed until they enter school (sometimes well into their primary years) their foundation is not nearly as strong (having effects on long-term learning and other outcomes) as it could, and should, be.

ASCA Head Start gathers data to measure children’s progress throughout the school year. The Galileo Assessment is a primary tool by which the program measures outcomes. During the 2011-2012 school year, “Literacy” measures increased from 26% at the beginning of the year to 52% by the end; “Early Math” skills

went from 41% to 71%; and “Social & Emotional Development” increased from 43% to 70%. All seven (7) areas assessed in Galileo demonstrated an increase throughout the 2011-2012 academic year. This is data we are proud of – and also data that only slightly demonstrates the local impact that that early childhood education is having on our children.

2011-2012 Year-End ASCA Head Start Child Outcomes

Capabilities (samples from the Galileo Assessment Instruments*)	Nov 11	Feb 12	May 12
Physical Development Correctly hold a pencil or crayon	42%	63%	77%
Health Identifies examples of foods that are healthy	30%	56%	66%
Social & Emotional Development Express wants and needs in conflict situations	43%	58%	70%
Language Uses descriptive words with objects (e.g. pretty flowers)	35%	52%	62%
Literacy Identifies all the letters in her/his name	26%	44%	53%
Early Math Counts forward from a number > 1 to find how many are in a group	41%	60%	71%
Social Studies Demonstrates cooperative behaviors such as helping, turn taking	43%	60%	69%

*Sample Report: represents the same children assessed during all three reporting periods (November, February and May)

The Take-Away

Overall, the national studies on Head Start say that HS children are: Less likely to repeat a grade; Less likely to need special education resources; More likely to graduate from high school; More likely to enter kindergarten aware of any possible special needs. Other long-term studies of child-focused quality education programs for low-income children show significant long-term improvements in: Employment; Educational attainment; Public subsidy needs; Homeownership.

Early childhood education should be viewed as important to the Ohio economy, generating billions of dollars each year, providing over 50,000 jobs, and laying the groundwork for the future economic success of Ohio by preparing the future generations for success and attracting business to Ohio (Ohio Department of Education study on economic impact of early care and education, 2004).

Effective early childhood education programs should be based on high-quality standards related to credentialing of teaching staff, implementation of research-based curriculum, training and emphasis related to special needs children, measurable outcomes, engaging and incorporating parents into the education and development of their children, focus on school readiness in preparing children and parents for kindergarten, and engagement of the community in significant ways (funding, support, partnerships, etc.).

Investing in quality early childhood education on the front-end benefits children and families by translating into School Readiness – children prepared to learn and thrive and parents empowered and prepared to engage in the educational experience with their child. The commitment and investment in early childhood education leads to K-12 savings when children show up for kindergarten prepared. School readiness enables teachers to focus on teaching and learning as opposed to behavioral and transitional issues, for example.

This is especially true related to children with special needs – children enter the school system with special needs already being identified, assessments completed, and an IEP in-hand when showing up for school. To reinforce the claim that investments in quality early childhood education having a cost-savings effect for K-12, often with early detection and intervention and parental education and empowerment, children with special needs during a quality early education program enter kindergarten having resolved those identified needs and no longer need an IEP or additional services. More parents show up to kindergarten with their children feeling empowered, wanting and expecting to be involved and engaged, and understanding the critical importance of attendance and learning at home. Teachers receive children prepared, significantly lessening burn-out and frustration, which translates into more effective teaching. All of these school readiness goals in Head Start translate into major societal benefits and return on investment overall.

Quality early childhood education programs, like Head Start, encourage significant investments into our K-12 educational systems in new and innovative ways to continue the upward trajectory that HS and other quality programs send our children to school riding on. With the existing resources, partnerships, and collaborations within the State of Ohio, in Summit County, and City of Akron, early childhood education and initiatives have the foundations to make a real societal impact on the lives of young people, their families, school systems, the overall community, economy, and quality of life for Ohioans.

In closing, one critical burning need that exists relative to what we were called here to testify for, is to give ALL children a quality early childhood education experience – all children deserve the opportunity for a strong foundation and a “Head Start”.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at this evening’s hearing.