

April 11, 2011

Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Winning Beginning NY is the state's early care and learning coalition, with over 200 members statewide. A number of our members have been interviewed as part of the work of the Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission. The coalition as a whole would like to take this time to share our thoughts with you.

The early years are critically important. In fact, 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five. Because of this, The World Bank released a 2010 report stating that "Early childhood development is the foundation of human capital formation, has the highest rate of return in economic development, and is the most cost effective way to reduce poverty and foster economic growth."

Early education programs including prenatal/postpartum home visiting, child care, Pre-K, Head Start, and afterschool help close the achievement gap for low-income children, increase school readiness, and provide essential work supports. In the short-term, these programs have a return on investment of \$1.86 for every dollar spent. In the long-term, they result in higher high school graduation rates and a 200% jump in a child's likelihood of attending college.

In order to support all children and families, New York State needs a coordinated, integrated system of early care and learning. *Winning Beginning NY's* vision for this system is as follows:

- Consolidate and coordinate the work across agencies with responsibility housed in an Office of Early Learning. This office would allow for an integrated approach to the development of a continuum of care and would add to efficiencies. Other states have successfully integrated their services into one system and New York is poised to take that step. We were pleased to see early childhood in the state's Race to The Top application: creation of an Office of Early Learning would demonstrate that early childhood education is a real priority for this Administration.
- State agencies that have responsibility for early care and learning programs/supports must work together. The state should remove silos and require the Office of Children and Family Services, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and the Departments of Education, Health and Labor to set common goals and develop an appropriate plan for coordination of efforts.
- Services must be available at all levels of the continuum, from those who need minimal supports to those who need intensive services.

Many of *Winning Beginning NY's* members sit on the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). As you know, the ECAC membership includes a broad base of representation from the public and private sector. We would ask that the ECAC assist in coordinating this work.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to comment on the work of the SAGE Commission. We hope to meet with the Commission in the future and serve as a resource as it moves forward.

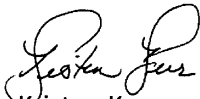
Sincerely,



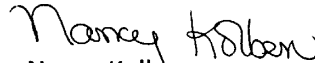
Kate Breslin
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cc: Paul Francis