

January 13, 2012

James R Tallon, Jr.
Board of Regents
United Hospital Fund, Empire State Building
1411 Broadway, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10018

Dear Regent Tallon:

On behalf of *Winning Beginning NY*, the state's early care and learning coalition, we were extremely pleased to learn that the Regents proposed an increase of \$53 million in Pre-K funding for the 2012 State Budget. We share your vision that it is critical for New York State to continue to expand access to early learning opportunities to ensure that all children are prepared for success in school and in life.

Our coalition is proud of the great strides the state made in recent years, with 444 school districts now offering Pre-K services in public school settings as well as in early childhood programs outside the public schools. We believe this approach makes the most of both public and private resources, while making the services more accessible. We are particularly pleased to learn that Rochester has some very compelling local data that about how quality preschool can support children's learning and success. We hope that you will support an effort as well to ensure that the promised 4% increase in state funding for education will include Pre-K and reflect the costs of providing Pre-K services.

For the long term, we remain extremely concerned that the funding strategy for Pre-K as it is currently structured will not sustain the program's goal of universal service nor will it support effective teachers and quality learning environments. The Regents certainly articulated key strategies and steps in your statement on early childhood education. However, we now have a hybrid approach to funding that does not support the true cost of providing the services, nor does it provide a reliable funding stream. Districts are being forced to make hard choices and we are hearing that early childhood education is on the table before many local school boards, as they try to operate in a way that is both fiscally and educationally sound. We are eager to protect these services and to ensure that they are understood as foundational to the state's efforts to provide a quality education that prepares children for college and career.

If we succeed in securing additional funding this year, we have identified some areas for possible amelioration that we would love to further discuss with you.

- How to ensure access for the most at-risk while moving toward a universal service
- The maintenance of effort that dually penalizes local school districts
- Strategies to provide full-day options
- Investments in professional development and quality improvement strategies
- The cost of high-quality services
- The need for more coherence between the public schools and CBOs
- Transportation, particularly in the state's most rural areas

We have thought a lot about these issues and are working with advocates across the state who are deeply invested in making Pre-K a vital resource to support early education. The Regents are a strong voice in support of early education and we want to work with you to ensure that this important program continues to thrive and grow even during these challenging economic times.

We thank you for your commitment to early education and look forward to further discussion with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,



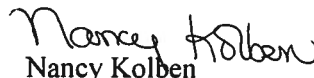
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Kristen Kerr
Executive Director
NYS Association for the Education
of Young Children



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