

January 5, 2011

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Like all of us in the field of early childhood, I know we share your disappointment in learning recently that New York was not chosen as one of the nine states awarded a \$100 million federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. But as a convener of *Winning Beginning NY*, the State's early care and learning coalition, I wanted to share that I also see positive signs for the future of early learning. With your leadership, we can create one of the strongest early learning systems in the country.

Last year, I returned to New York after working for nearly nine years in North Carolina – a state that did earn one of the federal grants (in fact, NC received the highest score of 269; NYS received 198). North Carolina's early learning effort was spearheaded by Governor Jim Hunt. And as the former executive director of the Smart Start Initiative in Durham, I saw firsthand how his leadership fueled the creation of a high-quality early childhood system that is now considered a model for other states.

When the winning Race to the Top states were announced, I called many former colleagues to offer congratulations. And I thought back on all the times Governor Hunt stepped up to lead the charge for investment in North Carolina's early childhood efforts.

In preparing New York's application, I saw your leadership in action. You marshaled tremendous resources to create a 400 page grant in a matter of weeks. By bringing us all together, new partnerships were forged and existing relationships were strengthened. And while our application was not ultimately selected, we created something valuable: a blueprint for an early learning system in New York State. It includes:

QUALITYstarsNY: New York State's Early Childhood Advisory Council has developed a five star quality rating and improvement system that would assign "star ratings," similar to those used in restaurants and movies, to early learning programs. It has been field tested and is ready to be implemented statewide.

Technical Assistance: Early education experts across the State stand ready to provide technical assistance to help providers improve their QUALITYstarsNY ratings.

Professional Development: Through New York Works for Children, the State can expand access to training for those who care for our youngest learners, thus creating higher quality programs.

Data: A comprehensive early childhood data system would help State and local agencies and others identify trends in early learning programs, answer policy questions, and plan for program development.

What a shame it would be if we tossed aside this valuable roadmap we created, as other states continue to invest in their children.

Today, we know 75% of brain development and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five. Early learning is key to a child's success - but also to the success of our State and nation's economy.

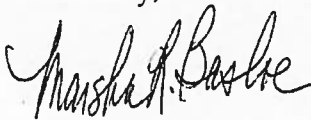
That is why *Winning Beginning NY* is calling on you to make early learning a continued priority and, in particular, commit \$20 million toward the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. This investment would serve as a down payment on the initiative, providing direct and indirect program improvement supports.

We have seen what happens when you and your Administration champion a cause! The recent announcement of the winners of the Regional Economic Development Councils showed how collaboration can create powerful opportunities that immediately translate into positive outcomes for New York's communities.

This is another vital opportunity that needs your leadership, strategic thinking and, most importantly, your investment. As New York strives to attract high tech and green jobs, jobs to sustain our future and our economy, we need to be sure that our children grow up to be ready for these jobs. And it starts with early childhood.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Marsha Basloe

Executive Director, Early Care and Learning Council

Co-convenor of *Winning Beginning NY*

cc: Katie Campos
Nicolas Storelli-Castro
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