Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2011

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-3100

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We are writing as Members of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation to express our strong support for California's application for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) grant competition. We believe the proposed reform measures will go a long way to strengthen the state's early learning and development system and programs and to help all children in California be prepared to succeed in school.

California has the opportunity to receive $100 million in federal funding over a four-year period to help achieve the goals of the RTT-ELC. If awarded these funds, California plans to further develop and expand successful local programs that are focused on increased outcomes for high-need children by implementing local Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). California will support these local efforts by partnering with Early Learning Challenge Regional Leadership Consortia that volunteer to strengthen their existing systems, align their systems to a common state framework, and serve as leaders and mentors to other programs and entities in their region. This unique approach requires these Consortia to meet a high standard of excellence while also developing systems that fit local needs.

The Regional Leadership Consortia participating in this proposal represent the opportunity to impact 1.8 million children, over 65% of the total number of children under age five living in California – which is more than any other state except Texas and accounts for 8.4% of all children under five in the nation. Additionally, 60% of the children represented are English Learners. California's application represents the largest opportunity to create impact in the RTT-ELC program.

We are confident that California's leaders are prepared to execute the ambitious, innovative plans for reform outlined by the Early Learning Challenge. California's children will benefit from the commitment of state and local officials, the education and business communities, and other education and early learning stakeholders working collaboratively towards improving the state's early learning education system.

This effort is critical if California and the United States are going to succeed in fulfilling our promise to our children and remaining strong and vital in the global market. Learning begins at birth, and high quality early learning opportunities can have lasting effects on children's achievement, behavior, and health. A strong early learning system is integral to a strong education system. We are pleased to support these efforts.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

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Lynn Woolsey

Member of Congress

List of Signers in Alphabetical Order:

Xavier Becerra
Howard Berman
Lois Capps
Dennis Cardoza
Judy Chu
Susan Davis
Anna G. Eshoo
John Garamendi
Janice Hahn
Mike Honda
Barbara Lee
Zoe Lofgren
Doris Matsui
Jerry McNerney
George Miller
Grace Napolitano
Nancy Pelosi
Laura Richardson
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Linda Sanchez
Adam Schiff
Brad Sherman
Jackie Speier
Pete Stark
Mike Thompson
Henry Waxman
Lynn Woolsey