

## Position and Talking Points on the President's ECE initiative

(Approved on June 6, 2014 by RIVHSA Board of Directors)

The first few years of life are formative for all children, and their environment and experiences during this period shape their brains in ways that underlie life-long learning, health, and well-being. Our national commitment to Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) recognizes the fundamental way that providing safe, nurturing early learning to children while supporting their families' ability to work and parent effectively creates opportunity across generations for stability and success. To realize that commitment, HS/EHS programs across the country have dedicated themselves to a mission of intervention and support for our nation's most vulnerable children. HS/EHS programs have a longstanding history of partnership that includes state-funded programs, local child care centers and family child care homes to expand access to high quality care, and there are early learning communities across the country eager for the chance to build on this model and extend quality even further to vulnerable children and families.

Since President Obama declared his commitment to early learning a year ago, he has called on Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool to every child in America. As part of that effort, the President will propose a series of new investments that will establish a continuum of high-quality early learning for a child – beginning at birth and continuing to age 5. By doing so, the President would invest critical resources where we know the return on our dollar is the highest: in our youngest children. The Preschool for All initiative will improve quality and expand access to preschool, through a partnership with all 50 states, to provide all low- and moderate-income four-year-olds with high-quality preschool, while encouraging states to serve additional four-year-olds from middle-class families. The initiative also promotes access to full-day kindergarten and high-quality early education programs for children under age four. The U.S. Department of Education will allocate dollars to states based their share of four-year olds from low- and moderate-income families and funds would be distributed to local school districts and other partner providers to implement the program.

Given the importance of making partnerships an effective model of the Preschool for All initiative, it is imperative that the model should also include the following:

1. Funding for this initiative should be federal to local;
2. Options for HS/EHS grantees to select the best service model for their community, including continuation and expansion of services to 4 year olds;
3. Non-competitive opportunities for current HS/EHS grantees to obtain or expand EHS.
4. Recognition of EHS as the proven and lead program for the evidence based home visitation initiative.
5. Incorporation of parent and family engagement as an integral part of program design, including governance.
6. A core definition of high quality services to ensure that it is aligned with regulations and performance standards for HS/EHS, which are considered to be best practice and should be the standards by which all participating entities are held accountable.

The Region IV Head Start Association (RIVHSA) wishes to express gratitude for the Administration's commitment to expanding early learning opportunities. Given the flexibility to design effective state and local models, the time to establish strong partnerships, and the support to improve local quality over time, the HS/EHS community stands ready to demonstrate our long-standing commitment to quality care and services for children and families. RIVHSA will continue to work to support them in their efforts and welcomes the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

### **About the Region IV Head Start Association, Inc.**

*The Region IV Head Start Association, Inc. (RIVHSA), founded in 1986, is a private, not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to improving the quality of early care and education for Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) children and their families. RIVHSA represents more than 165,000 children, 30,000 staff and 250 member programs. Our regional network includes a growing alliance of corporate partners and individual members, as well as our 8 state affiliates: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. It is our mission to serve as a clearinghouse for regional grantees and affiliate groups by providing resources, technical assistance, and training that promote the delivery of quality services.*

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To learn more, please visit [www.rivhsa.org](http://www.rivhsa.org) or contact one of the individuals listed below:

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