

Parent Education and Family Engagement in Early Education Act *Summary*

Research has demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education is an effective strategy for improving the developmental outcomes and long-term success of children, especially low-income children. One hallmark of high-quality early childhood education is the opportunity for parent education and family engagement. Because parents are their children's first and most important teachers, early childhood education programs present a unique opportunity for engaging parents on the skills and knowledge they need to effectively facilitate early learning and development and to increase the overall effectiveness of early intervention programs. Researchers have also pointed to parent education and family engagement as an important yet overlooked indicator of early childhood education quality.

Parent education and family engagement opportunities can take the form of parenting or child development classes, parent group discussions, in-class participation or opportunities for parental involvement in other aspects of an early childhood program. Parent education and family engagement activities in the context of early childhood education have been linked to improved parenting practices at home, and research suggests that parent engagement contributes to short-term developmental gains for children as well as improved long-term well-being of the children and families who participate.

The **Parent Education and Family Engagement in Early Education Act** would create a competitive grant program to allow early childhood education programs to supplement their services with parent education and family engagement programs. Specifically:

- This bill would provide grants to states to award subgrants, on a competitive basis, to local agencies in order for them to establish, expand, or enhance early childhood and elementary school parent education and family engagement programs in local communities.
- These grants could be used to fund professional development for child care and other early childhood program providers, direct parent education opportunities, and other evidence-based methods for improving parent and family engagement in early learning.
- Grantees would be required to evaluate their parent education and family engagement strategies, identify best practices, and submit their findings and relevant resources to a national clearing house.

The ***Parent Education and Family Engagement in Early Education Act*** is endorsed by Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education, Childcare Aware Minnesota, Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, Think Small!, Minnesota Community Action Partnership, Minnesota Child Care Association, New Horizons Academy, Minnesota Head Start, First Children's Finance, Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children, Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Women's Law Center, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFSCME, CLASP, and Zero to Three.