

May 4, 2004

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Specter,

We are writing to thank you for supporting additional funding for child care by voting for the Snowe/Dodd amendment to H.R. 4, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families reauthorization bill. Although the Senate has temporarily suspended consideration of the bill, we urge you to maintain your commitment to this much-needed level of funding to help low-income families work while keeping their children safe and well cared for.

As you well know, without these funds hundreds of thousands of low-income children could lose child care assistance over the next several years. In order to help these children and their families, make certain that your vote for the Snowe/Dodd amendment translates into real help for children and families by ensuring that child care receives a significant increase this year.

Across the country, families are already on long waiting lists for child care and thousands of families have lost or may lose help paying for child care because of state cutbacks in eligibility for child care assistance. Studies and interviews with parents find that families without assistance face impossible choices between paying for child care and paying the rent, going into debt, or settling for what they clearly know is inadequate care because they have no other options. In some cases this might mean leaving children home alone or putting pre-teens in charge of younger siblings. Ultimately many women in low-wage jobs that offer little flexibility are forced to quit their jobs and return to welfare. Yet, research shows that former welfare recipients with young children are 82 percent more likely to be employed after two years if they receive help with child care expenses. By providing more help with child care expenses to more families, you can help make the transition from welfare to work a permanent one and prepare our nation's most vulnerable children for school.

Child care funding has remained frozen for three years in the face of state cutbacks. We urge you to make it clear that you will only support a final conference agreement on a welfare/child care bill that contains the increase in child care funding included in the Snowe/Dodd amendment. The children of your state can no longer wait for the care they need.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences  
American Association of University Women  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
Americans for Democratic Action  
Associated Early Care and Education

Business and Professional Women/USA  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Child Care Consortium  
Child Care Law Center  
Children's Defense Fund  
Child Welfare League of America  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Community Coordinated Child Care  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children  
Easter Seals  
Generations United  
I Am Your Child Foundation  
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National AfterSchool Association  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Child Development Institute  
National Child Abuse Council  
National Child Care Association, Inc.  
National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Economic Development and Law Center  
National Indian Child Care Association  
National Institute on Out-of-School Time  
National Latino Children's Institute  
National League of Cities  
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association  
National Puerto Rican Coalition  
National Women's Law Center  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
NOW Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office  
Quality Care for Children  
RESULTS  
Service Employees International Union  
Teaching Strategies, Inc.  
The Episcopal Church, USA  
The Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Union for Reform Judaism and Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Way of America  
Women Employed  
YWCA USA