

## **FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**

Interim Report to the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation

Report Period: November 1, 2010 – July 31, 2011

### **I. Impact in the Federal Early Childhood Education and Care Policy**

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With the intense pressure to cut spending across the board, our main priority has been focused on protecting funding for quality early education and care programs from deep funding cuts. The support from the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation helped mobilize hundreds of law enforcement leaders from all corners of the country to help protect these critical programs.

Highlights of our efforts include:

- ❖ Launching a full-court national campaign to fight federal funding cuts for quality early learning programs. During the months of April, May and June, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS held 40 media events in 18 home states to key policy-makers across the country – generating more than 10 million media impressions.
- ❖ Holding meetings with top Members of Congress, including a meeting with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) in the midst of heated budget negotiations in Washington, DC.
- ❖ Sending a letter signed by more than 650 of our FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS members to all Members of Congress urging them not to cut funding for quality early learning programs.
- ❖ Publishing a flurry of op-eds and letters-to-the-editor in the hometown newspapers of key representatives in Congress asking them to consider the long-term savings in incarceration costs of early learning programs.

We also continue to make great progress to ensure education reform efforts incorporate early learning provisions into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. We remain deeply grateful for the partnership and support of the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation which makes our work possible.

### **II. Progress Made Towards Our Goals**

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**Goal # 1:** *Garner support for increased early education and care investments from key federal policy-makers.*

#### Protecting Early Learning from Looming Budget Cuts:

In the midst of the heated budget negotiations in Washington, two of our FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS Kentucky members met with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), urging him to protect federal early care and education programs. Our members conveyed a powerful message by stating, “Funding for early care and education ‘outweigh’ other issues as a crime prevention tool, including additional police, firearms, etc.” Our members also delivered a letter signed by more than 650 law enforcement leaders from all 50 states expressing law enforcement’s support for investments in quality early learning programs. Sen. McConnell’s office issued the following statement about the meeting:

*“Sen. McConnell was honored to meet with Kentucky law enforcement officials today, including Louisville Police Chief Robert White, to discuss a number of important issues. The senator appreciates the good work they’re doing and looks forward to continue working with our law enforcement community on ways to reduce crime and improve public safety in a fiscally responsible way.”*

### Advocating for a Pre-K to 12th grade Education System

An effective education improvement effort must be built on the foundation of high-quality early education, so that kids are ready to succeed when they enter kindergarten. To bolster support for the inclusion of early childhood education provisions in ESEA, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS organized meetings with:

- Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) - Chairman of the House Subcommittee with jurisdiction over K-12 reform.
- Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) - ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) – Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

Two notable things occurred during our meeting with Rep. Hunter. When he entered the room, he said, “I came into the committee position not knowing much about these issues, and I’m here to learn more.” Towards the end of our meeting, Rep. Hunter said, “I’m convinced [about early learning and] let’s make sure you are working with my team in D.C. on our draft legislation going forward so we can make sure we’re in sync.” Following our meeting, Rep. Hunter joined our members in press conference where he stated:

*“And I am convinced that early childhood education plays the biggest role and provides the biggest benefit – the biggest bang for that buck – that we’re looking for right now with this economy for American citizens.”* This quote was included in an excellent article in the *San Diego Union Tribune* newspaper.

**Goal # 2:** *Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement leaders to advocate for increased quality early education investment in kids, especially among targeted key policy-makers.*

Because all of our work is in the voice of our members, we spend a lot of time enlisting and cultivating strong relationships with our members. Towards this end, we enlisted 372 new police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, police leaders, and violence survivors since November 2010, for a total membership of 5,419.

**Goal # 3:** *Raise public and policy-maker awareness of the need to boost investments that help children develop into healthy adults, and make it a popular issue.*

### Early Learning National Campaign:

This spring, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS launched a first-ever nationwide Early Learning Campaign consisting of more than 40 press events in 18 states home to key policy-makers. At each of these events, our members visited a high quality early learning center, read a book to a classroom of 3- and 4- year olds, and held a press conference focusing on the research that shows the crime-prevention and long-term cost savings of early learning programs. More than 100 law enforcement leaders participated in our events. Highlights of our media coverage include:

- Generating more than 175 media hits, consisting of 80 print newspaper stories, 83 TV hits and 10 radio segments.
- Successful press events in key policy-makers’ districts including events in: Lakeville, MN to reach out to Rep. John Kline (R-MN), who chairs the House Education and the Workforce Committee; Cedar Rapids, IA in Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) district, who chairs the House, Education, Labor and Pensions committee; and Missoula, MT to reach out to Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MT), who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee with jurisdiction over early care and education.

To keep the momentum going, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS alongside our sibling organizations – MISSION: READINESS, AMERICA’S EDGE and SHEPHERDING THE NEXT GENERATION published 53 op-eds and LTEs across the nation to promote and protect key early education programs.