

**Statement of Dr. Richard M. Clifford, Senior Scientist, Frank Porter  
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Good morning, my name is Dick Clifford and I am a researcher at the FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My testimony represents my own personal views and does not necessarily reflect the positions of my organization or the various public and private agencies that support my work. I study young children and programs to support these children and their families. I am co-director of the National Pre-kindergarten Center at FPG (supported largely by the Foundation for Child Development). I served as Principal Investigator of a large-scale study of pre-kindergarten programs in 6 states, supported by the US Department of Education, and am currently co-director of a follow-up study of pre-kindergarten programs in 5 additional states (with support from the Pew Trusts through the National Institute for Early Education Research). Together these 11 states serve about 80% of the children in state sponsored pre-kindergarten programs in the US. So, I've had extensive opportunities to see how states are working to improve readiness of children coming to school. In the 1990's I took a leave of absence from the University to work in state government in North Carolina to help design and implement Governor Jim Hunt's major early childhood initiative, called Smart Start. In this role I had an opportunity to work first hand at encouraging the various agencies serving young children to work cooperatively to improve services for all children from birth up to school entry.

The task you are addressing is a difficult one. Some time ago I was asked to describe the early childhood services in the US at a conference in central Europe. I entitled my paper, Parallel Play. I did this because at the time, our diverse set of service providers—Head Start, Child Care, Early Intervention for young children with disabilities, and more traditional preschool programs—each mostly went their own way with little cooperative effort, occasionally interacting when there was a problem. That was in the 1990s. Since then governments at all levels in the US have dramatically increased their investments in early childhood services, yet we still have only minimal formal coordination of efforts in most states.

Let me give a single example relating to Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs. Both of these programs have as a major goal improving the readiness of children for school. In most of the states children who are from low income families, or are otherwise at risk for school failure, are targeted for services in the pre-kindergarten programs, just as in Head Start. One would expect that there would be close cooperation and coordination between these programs. In fact Head Start providers would normally be thought of as major sources of provision of services for the state pre-kindergarten programs since nearly all of these programs use both public school as well as private service providers to deliver the pre-kindergarten services to target families. Yet in our 11 states our data show that only 15% of the classes were in Head Start programs. Only two states had any major involvement of Head Start in the pre-kindergarten program. The remaining states had extremely low participation rates by Head Start providers.

As a state administrator in North Carolina I found linking our Smart Start initiative with Head Start was quite difficult. As you know, Head Start is funded and administered by the federal government through its national and regional Head Start offices in Health and Human Services. While the federal government provides support for states for a small office designed to help foster collaboration, these offices have no authority over the Head Start providers, so all decisions about expansion of Head Start programs, standards, and all formal oversight of Head Start is handled through the regional and national offices. On the other hand, such decisions for child care, early intervention and preschool programs are mostly made at the state and local levels. In fact this system makes it very difficult for states trying to create a more unified system of services for families with young children to truly coordinate these services.

Another factor is becoming increasingly important in this equation. More and more schools are involved in providing services to children prior to the traditional age of entry to kindergarten. In a review we conducted at the end of the 1990's, we estimated that nearly a million children were in school-based programs earlier than kindergarten entrance. Most of these children were starting a year before they would start kindergarten, that is, they were about four years old. There are about 4 million children per age group in the US, so this means about a fourth of all children now are starting school early. So, public schools have become a new major player in this field.

We are starting a new initiative at UNC-CH that we are calling First School. In this program we are developing a joint project with our local school system to establish a model program for children from about ages 3 to 8 years that will provide

a seamless transition from the preschool period to early school for young children without forcing very young children into the more traditional and structured school organization. Building upon this new model of how schools can be organized to serve younger children we will provide assistance to local and state agencies struggling with how to fit the needs of very young children into the traditional school models.

In 2003, the Office of Management and Budget estimated that federal and state expenditures on preschool and child care programs were some \$24 Billion. On the table at the end of my remarks I show the specifics for North Carolina at about the same time period. You can see that just for our state, total expenditures from state and federal sources for early childhood services were in excess of \$ 760 Million in 2002–03. While Head Start is a major source of support of such programs, it is by no means the dominant source at this point in time. As state governors and legislators seek to make the most efficient and effective use of limited resources they are naturally concerned that services not be duplicated, that funds are used in a way that maximizes the impact on children and that all appropriate uses of various sources of support are brought to bear on the issue of helping children come to school ready to succeed.

It appears that the problems in integrating services for young children are more tied to organizational and structural issues than to any one simple set of standards or rules. There is no clear message of who is in charge or whose job is this anyway. A few states are trying to address this situation. Georgia has recently consolidated many of the early childhood services under a new state agency—the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. It is responsible for overseeing child care and educational services for Georgia’s children ages birth through four and their families and includes the state’s large pre-kindergarten program. Massachusetts is also working to establish a new overarching agency in charge of all early childhood services. North Carolina is also looking at ways to improve the overall coordination and efficiency of service delivery.

The reauthorization of Head Start offers a wonderful opportunity to offer a few states the option of managing the Head Start program within their state as part of this overarching early childhood system. Only states that are far along in the process of developing a true system of services for young children and their families should be chosen to be part of this experiment. This experiment should be carried out carefully and evaluated thoroughly to provide guidance for a long term plan to assist states in providing the best services for their citizens. There are a number of key issues that should be considered in the legislation authorizing such trials. Many of these were covered in the legislation considered last year, but I would highlight a few. States chosen must demonstrate that they have the commitment to long-term system improvement. Formal state plans for implementing the goal of developing a true system of services must be required as part of the application by states to participate in the experiment. States must commit to maintaining or expanding state expenditures. The standards set for Head Start programs at the federal level should be maintained or strengthened under the state oversight, although some modifications of the standards to fit the individual state circumstances should be allowed. These modifications should not be allowed to have the effect of weakening the standards. Current Head Start grantees must be provided with assurances that they will continue to be grantees under the state oversight with only exceptions for clear violation of standards or other breeches of contractual requirements. States should be required to show how they would integrate the Head Start providers into the overall state plan. States should be required to report annually on progress in meeting the state plan and to propose any needed modifications to the plan. States should be required to submit regular reports on child and family services and their impact.

States must agree to participate in a careful evaluation of the effort. Currently there are few formal requirements for submission of data on children and families served or the nature of services. Because each agency currently has its own reporting system it is impossible to get a clear picture of how many children are receiving services or how many services individual children are receiving. As part of the evaluation of the experiment, a comprehensive data system should be established providing information on all services received by children and families under the approved state plan. States in the experiment would be required to implement use of the data system, with the goal of eventually requiring the data system for all states.

I applaud your attempts to bring together the various parts of the early childhood system and to integrate Head Start such a larger system. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Budgeted Funding Supporting North Carolina's Early Care and Education System Fiscal Year 2002-03				
	Federal	State	Total	0-5 Year Olds
<b>Strategy # 1</b>				
Smart Start - Total	\$ -	\$ 198,554,511	\$ 198,554,511	
This includes all State funds from Smart Start by Core Services				
<b>Strategy # 2</b>				
Child Care Assistance to Families -- Total <sup>1 and 2</sup>	\$ 169,542,104	\$ 49,866,160	\$ 219,408,264	
This includes Child Care Development Funds (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), and State Funds for Child Care Subsidy				
<b>Strategy # 3</b>				
Head Start -- Total	\$ 130,749,181	\$ -	\$ 130,749,181	
This includes Head Start, Early Head Start, Federal Expansion Funds, Head Start Collaboration Project and Professional Development Funds				
<b>Strategy # 4</b>				
Public School Pre-kindergarten -- Total	\$ 54,756,241	\$ 34,500,000	\$ 89,256,241	
This includes Title I, Basic Grants for Preschool				
Title I Even Start Family Literacy	\$ 39,041,070	\$ -	\$ 39,041,070	
Special Education Preschool Grants	\$ 4,215,171	\$ -	\$ 4,215,171	
IDEA	\$ 11,500,000	\$ -	\$ 11,500,000	
Exceptional Children	\$ -	\$ 34,500,000	\$ 34,500,000	
<b>Strategy # 5</b>				
More at Four-Pre-kindergarten -- Total	\$ -	\$ 35,975,802	\$ 35,975,802	
<b>Other System Support -- Total</b>	\$ 29,350,000	\$ 52,413,795	\$ 81,763,795	
This includes T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program				
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program - More At Four	\$ 350,000	\$ 2,600,000	\$ 2,950,000	
Early Intervention -- Comprehensive <sup>3</sup>	\$ 29,000,000	\$ 49,000,000	\$ 78,000,000	
<b>Total Budgeted Funding Effort for Strategies SFY 02-03</b>	<b>\$ 384,397,506</b>	<b>\$ 371,310,268</b>	<b>\$ 762,602,881</b>	