

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
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August 11, 2009

Dear Friends,

I am happy to welcome you to the Starting Strong - Connecting Schools and Early Learning Providers Conference. I commend your dedication to connecting public schools, early learning providers, and parents to learn more about aligning early care and education for children birth through age eight. As a parent and former early childhood educator, I understand the vital importance that early childhood care and education programs play in preparing students for a successful educational career and beyond.

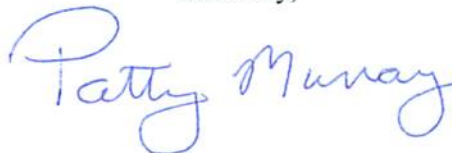
I have been an outspoken advocate for early childhood education since I came to the Senate in 1993. I have consistently worked to increase funding for Head Start, including \$2.3 billion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. I have also cosponsored the Education Begins at Home Act, legislation that will ensure grants for home visitation programs, which are proven to increase school readiness, lessen the likelihood of child abuse and neglect, and assist in the early identification of developmental and health delays. In addition, I have introduced the Ready to Learn Act, which will ensure children are prepared for school by providing much-needed funding to improve the quality of and expand access to states' pre-kindergarten programs

The wide array of partners present at this event today is a testament to Washington state's commitment to early childhood education. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Early Learning and Head Start State Collaboration Office, Thrive By Five Washington, the Foundation for Early Learning, Washington State University, the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children, the Association of Washington School Principals, the League of Education Voters, Save the Children, and United Ways of Washington are all vital leaders in the kind of innovation our country needs in order to move towards a high-quality early childhood education for every child.

I would like to thank you for your dedicated commitment to building a strong system of early care and education for Washington State. It is clear that everyone here at the Starting Strong Conference shares my goal of providing all children with a high-quality early learning education that will prepare them to enter school ready for long-term success.

Thank you again for your continued efforts on behalf of the children of Washington state.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator

173 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704
(202) 224-2621

1611 - 116TH AVENUE, NE
SUITE 214
BELLEVUE, WA 98004-3045
(425) 462-4460

2930 WETMORE AVENUE
SUITE 903
EVERETT, WA 98201-4107
(425) 259-6515

2988 JACKSON FEDERAL BUILDING
915 2ND AVENUE
SEATTLE, WA 98174-1003
(206) 553-5545
TOLL FREE: (866) 481-9186

601 WEST MAIN AVENUE
SUITE 802
SPOKANE, WA 99201-0613
(509) 624-9515

950 PACIFIC AVENUE
SUITE 650
TACOMA, WA 98402-4450
(253) 572-3636

THE MARSHALL HOUSE
1323 OFFICER'S ROW
VANCOUVER, WA 98661-3856
(360) 696-7797

website: <http://murray.senate.gov>
e-mail: <http://murray.senate.gov/lemail>
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

402 EAST YAKIMA AVENUE
SUITE 390
YAKIMA, WA 98901-2760
(509) 453-7462