

November 23, 2010

Mr. Robert Sargis
Reports Clearance Officer
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Administration, Office of Information Services
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, DC 20447

Docket Number: 2012–2013 (ACF–118), Child Care and Development Fund Plan

Attention: Comments from the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA)

Dear Mr. Sargis:

As the nation's largest, volunteer child advocacy association, the National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA) has had a significant impact on improving the education and well-being of America's children for 114 years. During this time, National PTA championed the efforts to defeat polio, led the campaign for child immunizations, supported school desegregation, ensured school children had hot school lunches, and worked to improve the nation's juvenile justice system. Currently with over 5 million members and 24,000 local units, National PTA continues to be a powerful voice for all children by developing meaningful family engagement programs and policies that will improve student achievement.

The evidence has become increasingly clear-if we want to prepare our nation's children for success in the competitive 21st-century economy, education must begin long before they enter school. Providing effective, targeted supports and interventions to children and parents beginning at birth will improve a number of outcomes throughout their lives, including: improved graduation rates, increased employment and earnings, and reduced likelihood of arrest and incarceration.¹ Family engagement in education is also cost effective; it can raise student

academic achievement so substantially that schools would need to increase spending by more than \$1000 per pupil to gain the same results.ⁱⁱ

The National PTA appreciates the opportunity to submit comments the Child Care and Development Fund Plan. NPTA will respectfully address the specific question that specifically impacts PTA's mission and public policy work. We offer our recommendations to assist the Department in leveraging systemic family engagement to achieve positive outcomes.

Response to Question A (*Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility*):

1) Recommendation: The National PTA is in strong support of the Department's commitment to reaching out to families to inform them of the availability of grants and assist them with the application process. In addition, we recommend that families are engaged in the planning process for grants administration and data collection so they can provide direct input and feedback about how to best meet the needs of local families.

Rationale: A recent study by the University of Chicago identifies family engagement as one of the five "key ingredients" of school improvement, as important as teacher capacity and curriculum alignment.ⁱⁱⁱ Families play a critical role in improving literacy, by supporting learning at home and reinforcing standards outside of the classroom. Family engagement would facilitate the development, implementation, and evaluation of best practices in the field and encourage collaboration between nonprofits and LEAs to take promising practices to scale.

2) Recommendation: Include community based organizations as a way for parents to apply for CCDF services under 2.1.2.

Rationale: Partnering with community-based organizations to help parents apply for CCDF and/or related services is a way to reach families in underserved populations, specifically low-income families or parents with children who are limited-English proficient who may not have the access, understanding, or trust to apply independently.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Child Care and Development Fund. Please contact Elizabeth Rorick, Acting Director of Government Affairs at erorick@pta.org or (703) 518-1200 Ext 3326 if you have any additional questions that may need to be addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles J. Saylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Charles J. “Chuck” Saylor
National PTA President

ⁱ Lawrence J., J.M. Schweinhart, Z. Xiang, W. S. Barnett, C.R. Belfield, and M. Nores. *Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40*. Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press, 2005.

ⁱⁱ Houtenville, A. and Conway, K. (2008). Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, XLIII, 2. Pp-437-53.

ⁱⁱⁱ Anthony S. Bryk and others, *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2010), p.p. 46 & 83.