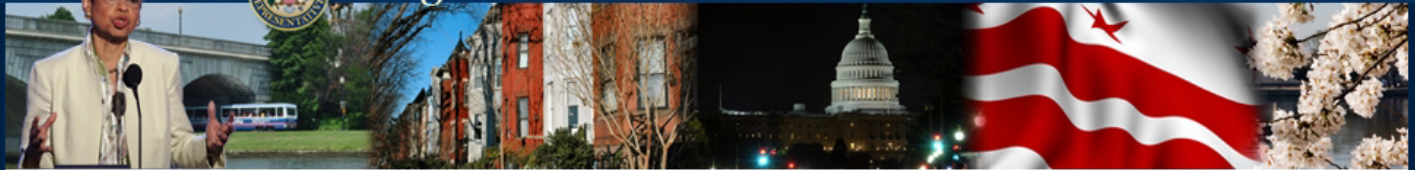




Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton



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Norton Introduces Public School Pre-Kindergarten Bill to Fill Gap in No Child Left Behind Law

October 17, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC - Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today will introduce the Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Early Childhood Education Act of 2009 to use seed grant funds to encourage school systems to provide universal, public school pre-kindergarten education for every child, regardless of income, by establishing pre-kindergarten grades in public school. Norton wants her bill included in the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind law, which she says misses the most fertile years of brain development and early learning by human beings by leaving out pre-kindergarten education. The Universal Pre-K Act would bring the educational benefits of pre-K within reach of the great majority currently left out by adding new grades for 3 and 4-year-olds, similar to 5-year-old kindergarten programs that are now routinely a part of public school education. Providing Pre-K as part of approved curricular in school systems would ensure qualified teachers and safe facilities for all children.

The Universal Pre-K Act addresses the large and increasing group of parents who are neither wealthy enough to afford early education or poor enough to qualify for Head Start. It also would leave proven programs funded by our federal government. "The combination of Head Start success and years of data from brain science conclusively demonstrate that the serious education of children must include the early pre-school years today," Norton said. "The needs of low-income kids were the first to come to Congressional attention. Data from the benefits to these children must now open the doors for all kids during the most fertile brain development years of childhood."

The Congresswoman said that especially now, when middle-class America, along with single mothers and low-income parents, are facing job loss, foreclosures, and rising healthcare costs, the federal government must plant the seeds for early childhood education that has proven life-long benefits. Traditionally, early learning programs have been available at either end of the economic spectrum - to the affluent and to lower income families. The Norton bill provides a practical way to gradually move to universal pre-school education in schools throughout the country.

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