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March 12, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Azar:

Congratulations on your confirmation earlier this year. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has a broad mission to enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans, and I look forward to working with you to advance that mission by helping to foster improvements in medicine, public health, and social services. One area in which I hope we can work together toward this end is the consolidation and streamlining of fragmented or overlapping federal early learning and child care programs.

A February 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stated that “the federal investment in early learning and child care is fragmented in that it is administered through 45 programs that provide or may support related services to children from birth through age 5.” A subsequent February 2014 GAO report similarly identified 45 programs, and a July 2017 GAO report again cited fragmentation, overlap, and duplication among early learning and child care programs.

Both the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (P.L. 113-186) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95) include provisions that seek to address this overlap and fragmentation. These laws require reviews of early learning programs, plans to eliminate overlap and fragmentation, and subsequent reports to Congress on the status of those efforts. Unfortunately, Congress has yet to receive from the Department the annual report that was due in December 2017.

It is important for Congress to have this information in order to conduct oversight and ensure the proper use and maximum impact of public funds spent in this area. Investments in early learning and child care programs can benefit the nation and save taxpayers down the road, and we have a duty to all our citizens, particularly those served by these programs, to ensure the wise and efficient use of those resources.

Therefore, I respectfully request production of the required report as soon as possible. If the report is not yet available for release, please have your staff provide mine with bi-weekly updates on its progress until issuance.

I am enclosing my previous correspondence with HHS on this issue for your convenience. If you have any questions regarding this request, your staff may contact Paul Vinovich, Chief Counsel for the Senate Budget Committee, at 202-224-0642.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter, and again, I look forward to working with you to support the important mission of the Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Enzi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Michael B. Enzi
Chairman
Committee on the Budget