



October 12, 2011

Sherri Killins, Ed.D
Commissioner
Dept. of Early Education and Care
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Dear Commissioner Killins,

The Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR) is a public policy organization comprised of Chief Executive Officers and leading executives from some of the state's largest companies, employing more than 210,000 people in Massachusetts. Our mission is to strengthen the state's long-term economic vitality, with the goal of making Massachusetts a more highly-desirable place to do business. To achieve this mission, our members believe in a very simple premise for economic development: invest in our competitive advantages, and refocus on our competitive disadvantages. Massachusetts' most significant competitive advantage is its human and intellectual capital, and MBR believes that there are few better investments than early childhood education to prepare the next generation's workforce and improve the state's global competitiveness.

We are excited by the *Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge* (RTTT-ELC) and the unprecedented opportunity to strengthen and expand the state's coordinated system of programs and services for children, especially high-needs children, from birth through age 5. Under Governor Deval Patrick's direction, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has been designated as the lead agency for the RTTT-ELC application and is well positioned to compete for funding. As a key partner in moving the Commonwealth's vision forward, and in improving our economic competitiveness, we submit this letter of support.

The Commonwealth's early learning and development reform agenda, as detailed in the RTTT-ELC application, is an ambitious, yet achievable plan for improving child outcomes through investments in program quality, teacher quality, and family/community engagement. It accounts for the significant progress that has already been made in establishing a successful state system, while offering bold strategies to address persistent barriers to closing the school readiness gap. We endorse this agenda, for we believe it provides the necessary foundation for an education continuum that will produce qualified workers for a 21st Century, global economy.

MBR has also been a leader in Massachusetts in developing and advancing a state science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) agenda. This work has been recognized nationally as best practice, and is another key investment in the state's human and intellectual capital. The RTTT-ELC application makes specific mention of the inclusion of STEM in early learning programs through innovative public-private partnerships. We are particularly supportive of this idea, and by the power and potential of the intersection of early childhood and STEM public policy.

The RTTT-ELC will allow the Commonwealth to expand on past efforts and focus more deliberately on closing the school readiness gap and ensuring all of our youngest citizens are prepared for lasting school—and eventually workplace—success. It will also allow for continued and renewed investment in those systems, programs and services that both serve children and families, as well as invest in the long-term prosperity of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JD Chesloff". The signature is written in a cursive style.

JD Chesloff
Executive Director