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**“One Goal, One Cause – Building America’s Future Together”
From East to West Across the Nation, We Stand-Up for Our Youngest Children**

Plainview, NY – Today, Early Childhood Education Advocates on Long Island joined the national “Early Learning Day of Action” to show support for President Obama’s Early Learning Initiative, which calls for an investment of \$75 billion in early childhood education programs. The event was held at Rainbow Chimes International School for Early Education, in Huntington.

Spearheaded by the National Women’s Law Center based in Washington D.C., hundreds of organizations and advocates will participate in the Early Learning Day of Action over the next two weeks. In New York State, ten events coordinated by the Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College campaign (WinningBeginningNY (WBNY), Citizen Action of New York (CANY), and the Alliance for Quality Education of NY(AQE) are taking place across the state from May 30-June 14.

“The investments we make in child care services today will not only save society money tomorrow,” says Suffolk County Legislative Majority Leader and Human Services Committee Chair DuWayne Gregory (D-Amityville), “but will also afford the added benefit of strengthening the social fabric of the world our children will inherit from us.”

EYI’s President Dr. Dana E. Friedman stated, “The stakeholders standing beside me today from the Long Island community - parents, business and government leaders, pediatricians, educators in the schools and child care programs - can play a role in assuring our youngest children are ready for success in school and life.” Advocates on Long Island say this national focus on early learning builds on a renewed emphasis in New York, where after years of flat funding, lawmakers approved \$25 million in new money to fund new half and full-day pre-K slots for children in high need districts. This hallmark initiative is the first effort by the state to fund full-day pre-K slots.

“We know that every \$1 invested in quality pre-K saves \$7 down the road, which is a terrific return on investment,” said Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education. “In New York State and around the country, early childhood education is being recognized as a critical piece of any plan to improve education as well as economic development.” At a time when many school districts are facing budget cuts, early childhood advocates say pre-K can help schools reduce spending. The \$7 in savings from the pre-K

investment comes from reduced costs in remedial support to fewer children entering the criminal justice system. Research has also shown that students who attend high quality pre-K typically experience higher academic achievement, go on to college and secure higher paying jobs.

On Long Island, there are roughly 226,000 children under age 5 and about 60% have working parents, leaving 133,000 children who need child care and many more whose parents recognize the benefits of children having early experiences and want preschool for their children as well. Adding together all the spaces in all types of early childhood programs – child care centers, family child care homes, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and pre-K programs – there are only 62,000 slots for these children. That is why it is incumbent on community members to create early learning experiences in all community spaces and help parents to work on building school readiness skills.

"Health is an essential part of school readiness. Children by age 5 have developed 85% of their intellect, personality and social skills. Healthy children are ready for positive early experiences that so critical to shaping neuro-development in the first years of life." said Dr. Elizabeth Isakson, Pediatrician and Co-director of Docs for Tots. "Now, President Obama, Governor Cuomo and New York State Lawmakers recognize the need for increased investment in early childhood education."

According to Rev. Kathleen Roche, Exec. Dir., Rainbow Chimes School, "Last year 2,100 children were cut from the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program in Suffolk County, and currently, only families at 100% of the poverty level are able to receive child care subsidies. We were forced to *disenroll* 80 low-income children last year because of the child care subsidy cuts. These parents were forced to suddenly quit their jobs and go on welfare, or had to find unlicensed and untrained babysitters operating under the radar."

The Early Years Institute, a regional non-profit organization based in Plainview, NY, serves as a catalyst for community partnerships and innovations to ensure all young children have the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. EYI is viewed as a trusted source of information and a thought leader on early childhood education and school readiness.

The Long Island Progressive Coalition, the local affiliate of Citizen Action of New York, is a 34-year old organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development, revitalizing local communities, creating effective democracy, enhancing human dignity, and achieving economic, racial and social justice.

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