Statement of Carolyn Lyons, President/CEO of Strategies for Children on today’s introduction of the Strong Start for America’s Children Act by Congress.

Strategies for Children applauds Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Congressman George Miller (D-CA), and Congressman Richard Hanna (R-NY) for their bi-partisan leadership in introducing the Strong Start for America’s Children Act.

Today is a big day for children and families in Massachusetts and across the country. Over the past decade, the commonwealth has led the country as we put into place a system of high-quality early education for all children, beginning at birth. Yet significant achievement gaps still exist. Too many children show up for school already behind, and too many will never catch up. Experts agree that high-quality early education has a lifetime impact on young learners in terms of greater academic readiness and improved social skills.

The Strong Start for America’s Children Act builds on the progress that we have made in Massachusetts under the leadership of Governor Patrick and our state legislators to ensure that our children have the foundation they need to be successful in school and in life.

The bill has three main parts:

- Grants to states to expand high-quality preschool, building on their current state-funded preschool delivery system (there are also grants for states that do not yet invest in or need to raise the quality of their standards for preschool);
- Grants to create Early Head Start/child care partnerships to improve the quality of and expand access to high-quality child care for infants and toddlers; and
- A call for the expansion of the voluntary home visiting program for infants and toddlers.

We look forward to working with the Massachusetts Congressional delegation and the lead sponsors of the bill as it moves through the legislative process.

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