



May 27, 2020

The Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation launched Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society in February 2020. Since then COVID-19 has changed our lives and our world. As we cautiously re-open the economy it is timely to turn to the central findings of our report and its recommendations.

Any recession, regardless of the cause, hits the vulnerable disproportionately. It is important that governments make choices to prevent the inequity gap from widening even more—and indeed cause it to narrow. As our study documents, early childhood education (ECE) is a powerful equalizer. It narrows achievement gaps that emerge before children even start school. We need ECE more than ever to help address the trauma of the pandemic, to ensure children aren't left behind and to support parents' ability to the work, including those who will continue to work from home.

Officials have signalled they recognize ECE's role as a bulwark against the pandemic and are prepared to invest. In Early Years Study 4 we advise governments to invest wisely; this message is particularly relevant. Too many early childhood programs were in difficulty before COVID-19's onset, unable to recruit qualified staff and struggling financially. Those that make it through the shutdowns will be ill-equipped to compensate children for lost time. ECE needs be removed from market fluctuations and take its place as education's first tier, supported by a strong public infrastructure and open to all children.

Early Years Study 4 points to the current and future returns of public investment in ECE. This has not changed. Dollars invested in ECE are spent in local economies where educators and families live and work. It frees parents to take on the jobs that keep our communities functioning and generates the tax dollars that pay for vital public services. ECE continues to pay back over the life course of the child by reducing the need for special education, and promoting higher graduation rates, a more competent workforce and capable citizenry.

Thank you for your interest in Early Years Study 4. I believe it provides a roadmap for these particularly difficult times and hope you find it useful to your work on behalf of children and families.

Please keep safe and healthy.

Best regards,

Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain