[The prepared statement of Mr. Barnett follows:]

Statement of Dr. W. Steven Barnett, Director, National Institute for Early Education Research, New Brunswick, NJ

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am Steven Barnett, Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. NIEER is an independent, nonpartisan organization that conducts and disseminates research on early childhood education policy. I am also a professor of education economics and policy. I wish to express my appreciation to the Subcommittee for investigating the potential for improvement of early childhood education through better integration.

Over the past 40 years a patchwork quilt of federal, state, local, and private programs has evolved to serve children at ages 3 and 4. We have made some remarkable progress: 7 of 10 children now attend a preschool program at age 4 (about the same percentage that attended kindergarten in 1970); 4 of 10 attend a preschool program at age 3. Despite this progress many children still do not attend a preschool program, including more than 1/2 of the 3- and 4-year olds in poverty. And, many who do go to preschool still fail to get an effective education. As an economist who has studied the returns to high quality preschool education for over 20 years, I find that America pays a high price because public programs for young children have low standards and too little funding to reach high standards.

Across the nation, public preschool programs have grown to the point where coordination and integration are important concerns. Head Start provides for about 900,000 children, 800,000 at ages 3 and 4. State preschool programs serve over 700,000 children, nearly all of them at age 4. State pre–K now serves more 4's than Head Start. Additional children are served in public school programs for young children with disabilities. Others attend private programs at least partly paid for with child care subsidies. Most public programs target highly overlapping populations.

This complex arrangement is generally good. Programs rarely have enough money to serve all eligible children. Child care subsidy rates are too low to purchase effective education, and blending programs may be the only way to obtain education and a full day of child care. There is potential for better services through cooperation and integration. However, there is also potential for confusion among parents and providers, conflicting regulations, highly variable services, and uneven coverage. NIEER's annual reports on state pre-k and analyses of national survey data from parents make this clear. There are dramatic differences among the states and within states. Over the past decade, the south and northeast rapidly expanded preschool education, while the west lagged behind. Rural and Latino children appear to have less access to early childhood education than others.

A few states offer preschool education to all children at age 4, and others are moving toward that goal. By our count, in 7 states more than 1/2 of the 4-year-olds were served by state pre–K, Head Start and IDEA combined in 2002. However, 12 states provided no state funding for Pre–K in 2002. State early education standards also vary widely. Many states require teachers to have a BA and specialized training, but others do not even require a 2-year degree. Only 16 had comprehensive learning standards, though that has been changing fast. State funding varied from $1,000 to nearly $9,000 per child, but only 3 states came within a $1,000 of Head Start spending. Average state funding was only 1/2 the federal Head Start amount. However, it is impossible to make accurate cost comparisons today.

The reason costs cannot be accurately compared, and a major difficulty for learning how to better integrate early education programs, is that public data systems don't provide the needed information. For example, many state programs are partly funded by local schools (sometimes with Title I funds), but it is nearly impossible to find out how much they spend. The federal government should remedy this problem by supporting the development of joint data systems that provide unduplicated counts of the children uniquely or jointly served, the services they receive, and the public expenditures that support them. The nation knows how much the federal, state, and local governments spend per child on K–12 education in each state. Similar information should be available on preschool education.

I don't have proven solutions to offer you today. Yet, the situation is only going to become more serious, making it essential to enable states, Head Start, and other federal programs to jointly develop and test new approaches, particularly where states offer good universal preschool education. There are many options to be tested from shifting Head Start resources to younger children to the development of joint programs pooling state and federal program resources. I have attached an appendix to my testimony that details existing collaborative efforts; at least 21 states now use

Head Start to serve 7% of their children in state pre–K. My recommendations for approaches that could be tested in limited experiments are as follows.

- Give states increased flexibility to use Child Care Block Grant, TANF and other federal funds for state pre–K.
- Give states increased authority over Head Start where state pre–K standards are high and coverage extensive.
- Require Head Start programs to maximize participation in state pre–K where this can be done without diluting services and states are willing to provide needed funds.
- Credit Head Start and state pre–K for serving each other's eligible populations when they can meet the requisite standards. This might be more cost-effective while providing greater parental choice and competition.
- Where the Head Start eligible population is too sparse to support a Head Start program, offer families credits to be used to purchase equivalent services from providers that meet Head Start standards.
- As an incentive for high pre–K standards, provide supplemental funds to Head Start to meet higher state standards, for example, enabling Head Start to hire teachers with BA degrees and pay competitive salaries or to reduce class size.

No one can guarantee that these or any other policy changes will succeed. Thus, it is vital that the federal government support true experiments that are rigorously evaluated. This will provide a safeguard so that policy changes do not lead Head Start and other programs to lose their effectiveness, and it will ensure that definitive conclusions can be reached regarding what works. Broad implementation of policy changes should proceed only after positive findings.

I have some examples from New Jersey where I reside. My comments do not represent the views of anyone in state government, including (and particularly) my wife, Dr. Ellen Frede who is Assistant to the Commissioner for Early Childhood. New Jersey is implementing the nation's most ambitious pre–K program for all 3- and–4-year olds in 31 school districts that serve a 1/4 of our children. This program has sought to integrate child care and Head Start with state pre–K. This has not been easy. Fro example, we have had difficulties with the requirements to verify income for child care subsidies. When Head Start agencies have turned over, agreements have not been automatically continued leaving districts to face gaps in services. We appear to have problems with unfilled Head Start slots in some districts while Head Start eligible children occupy state pre–K slots and other children can not find places. The state is currently working with the Head Start regional office to find solutions to some of these problems.

In conclusion, I want to thank you once again for taking up the cause of improving early childhood education. The nation has been making more headway in expanding access than in improving quality. Yet, increasing the numbers of children served with public money is sound policy only when it also provides an effective education. Whatever you can do to ensure that more children receive a high quality, effective preschool education will pay substantial human and economic dividends far into the future.

APPENDIX: CURRENT STATE/LOCAL COLLABORATIONS WITH HEAD START

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Head Start and the States partner in a number of ways already. A basic overview follows.

State Financial Collaborations

Seventeen states supplement federal Head Start funds in order to provide over 28,000 slots, wrap-around services, and quality enhancements. In fiscal year 2003, this supplemental funding totaled over $177 million.

State	Amount (FY 2003)	Slots
Alaska	$ 6,276,000	403
Connecticut	4,500,000	332
Delaware	4,456,700	843
Hawaii	390,000	0
Idaho	1,500,000	151
Maine	3,581,018	199
Maryland	3,000,000	26
Massachusetts	6,100,000	400
Minnesota	17,620,000	2,641
New Hampshire	241,337	0
New Mexico	1,650,000	0
Ohio	87,632,156	17,284
Oklahoma	3,300,000	105
Oregon	26,100,000	4,000
Pennsylvania	2,000,000	0
Rhode Island	1,800,000	340
Wisconsin	7,425,000	1,449
TOTAL	$ 177,572,211	28,173

Source: Barnett, Hustedt, Robin, & Schulman, 2004

State–Head Start Preschool Collaborations

In 2002–2003, just under 740,000 children were enrolled in state-funded preschool initiatives in 38 states. About 7% of the preschoolers enrolled in these state-funded programs were served in Head Start programs. At least 21 states used Head Start programs to serve some state pre–K children (Barnett, Hustedt, Robin, & Schulman, 2004). About 13% of the public schools operating preschool programs reported using Head Start funds according to an NCES report on pre–K in the public schools.

State Administrative Collaborations

Every state-as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico-also receives grants from the Administration for Children and Families to fund state Head Start Collaboration Offices. The intent of these grants was to "create a visible presence for Head Start at the state level and to assist in the development of multi-agency and public-private partnerships among Head Start and other interested stakeholders" (California Head Start State Collaboration Office, 2005). These offices are also responsible for integrating the efforts of various state and community organizations in eight key areas:

- Improve access to health care services
- Improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of child care services
- Improve collaboration with welfare systems
- Expand and improve education opportunities in early childhood programs Initiate interactions with AmeriCorps–The National Service Program
- Improve opportunities for children with disabilities
- Improve access to family literacy services
- Improve collaboration for homeless families (Nevada Head Start Collaboration Office, 2005).

In order to reach these goals, states have established various noteworthy partnerships. For example, in Nevada all Head Starts sites have applications for the state's CheckUp program, a health insurce program for children from low-income families (Nevada Head Start–State Collaboration Project, 2005}. Pennsylvania has four Technical Assistance Regional Coordinators. Their background, areas of expertise, and contact information are available on the state's Collaboration Project web site (Pennsylvania Head Start State Collaboration Project, 2005). Texas has established a statewide online trainer registry. Trainers must be approved based on their educational background and training received in adult education and learning, as well as their experience working with children and teaching adults (Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office, 2005). .

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