



FOR OUR BABIES

“First Things First”

Since the start of the “For Our Babies” campaign, many people have asked me why should America alter its funding priorities during this very challenging economic time to spend more money on babies. Why babies before others?

The answer is a simple one. Based on what we continue to learn about the developing brain from conception to age 3, we know that without paying attention to infants whatever we do later with children and adults either builds on or compensates for a weak foundation.

It is not that services for older children and adults are not important and necessary. Infancy is only a foundation for later learning and life. But building on a weak foundation causes later problems. Fixing and reconstructing what should have been built properly in infancy is both difficult to accomplish and expensive to undertake. If we don't build things right from the start, we will have to do more work and pay more later to get them right.

For Our Babies says attend to infants first, not because we want to diminish the importance of other periods of development, but rather because we see that without the foundation of healthy infancy, the other periods of development will be diminished. Paying attention to infancy maximizes the opportunity for children to take advantage of experiences that come their way in later periods of development. Attending to infants makes it easier for children to learn, teachers to teach, and adults to achieve their potential.

I know that this is a tough economic time for our country; the notion of spending money in new areas and on new services might seem foolhardy. But investment in infancy is the antithesis of foolhardiness. We need Americans functioning at full capacity – emotionally stable, intellectually strong and verbally fluent – especially in tough economic times. Those fully functioning Americans will come from the wombs and homes and childcare centers that have been adequately supported to actualize the development of our infants.

Unless we take a fresh new look at what science is telling us about the development of babies and act on it, we will always be trying to catch up and compensate. The potential for a strong American future is right in front of us. It starts with how we treat babies. Please join with me in my effort to get more support for America's babies. Get involved in our “For Our Babies” campaign. Let's see how many people we can inspire to act pragmatically, roll up their sleeves, and do “First Things First”.

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