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Business and Policy Leaders Gather For National Summit on Early Childhood Programs

Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Nobel Laureate Economist Dr. James Heckman and Executives from Some of America's Leading Companies Will Discuss Why Early Childhood Programs Are Crucial for Economy

Summit Follows Recent Series of Letters from Business Leaders to President Obama and Congress Voicing their Support for Greater Investment in Early Childhood Programs

WASHINGTON – [America's Promise Alliance](#) (America's Promise) and its early childhood project ReadyNation, along with the [Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students](#) (GEEARS) today announced the 2013 *National Business Leader Summit on Early Childhood* will be held in **Atlanta September 22 and 23** (full Summit agenda found at www.ReadyNation.org). The biennial event is the nation's only conference that will bring together more than 200 business leaders and policy makers to examine the impact of effective early childhood programs on the nation's economic health and business leadership to promote investments in early childhood as a crucial workforce development strategy for the nation.

The Summit will take place after two separate letters were sent from business leaders urging President Obama and Congress to work together to expand access to quality early learning programs, citing the benefits those programs provide to the nation's economy, workforce preparedness and competitiveness in the global marketplace. The latest letter, released today, includes the signatures of more than 30 of the nation's most prominent executives representing key sectors of the U.S. economy, such as **D. Scott Davis**, chairman and CEO of United Parcel Service; **Jim Rohr**, chairman of PNC Financial Services Group; **Paul Bowers**, president and CEO of Georgia Power and **John Pepper**, former CEO of Procter & Gamble.

"The United States is competing in a world economy where knowledge is as important as abundant natural resources," said James E. Rohr, PNC executive chairman. "We must invest in pre-K to ensure we're developing the fundamental skills and learning that our children will need to compete in the future."

The Summit will kick-off the evening of **September 22** with remarks from Nobel Laureate economist **Dr. James Heckman**. One of the most respected researchers in the field, his work has focused on measuring the economic benefits of early childhood programs. On **September 23**, **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan** will discuss the importance of public investments in early childhood. Following Secretary Duncan, senior executives of several of the nation's most well-known companies – **Jim Rohr** of PNC Financial Services; **Pete Selleck** of Michelin North America; **Carol Tome** of The Home Depot; **Paul Amos II** of Aflac; and **Carol Barnett** of Publix Super Markets, Inc. – will take part in a conversation on the business case for investing in early childhood programs.

Other presenters will include **Alan Webber**, co-founder of *Fast Company* magazine; **William Canary**, CEO of the Business Council of Alabama; **Randa Grob-Zakary**, CEO of the LEGO Foundation in Denmark; and **Ellen Galinsky**, President of the Families and Work Institute and author of *Mind in the Making*.

"Business leadership on early childhood speaks to the heart of our work at America's Promise: that every person has a role in helping America's youth reach their full potential," said John Gomperts, president and CEO, America's Promise Alliance. "Investing in the early years helps both our children and our economy succeed."

Sara Watson, director of ReadyNation, added, "The growing number of business leaders who have expressed their support for early learning sends a clear message that early childhood is a business issue. We need their voices in this national conversation about how to help children become the productive adults our country needs."

A 2012 ReadyNation [survey](#) found that since 2007 business organizations in 49 states have publicly supported early childhood programs and initiatives. The report also revealed that early childhood—traditionally viewed as a family or social services issue—has increasingly become an education and economic development issue for businesses.

ReadyNation is the early childhood project of America's Promise. It mobilizes business leaders to support effective early childhood policies and programs at the local, state and national levels and is part of the Grad Nation Campaign led by America's Promise. Grad Nation is a large and growing movement of dedicated individuals, organizations and communities working together to raise the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating less than 80 percent of its students on time. The [2013 Building a Grad Nation report](#) found that for the first time, the nation is on track to meet the goal of a 90 percent national graduation rate by the class of 2020. The report found the national high school graduation rate increased an average of 1.25 percentage points each year from 2006-2010 to 78.2 percent. For more information, visit www.americaspromise.org.

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About America's Promise Alliance

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. Building on the legacy of our founding chairman General Colin Powell, America's Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in the Five Promises—Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. For more information, visit AmericasPromise.org.

About the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS)

GEEARS inspires and leads a statewide movement on early learning and development for children ages birth to five through outreach to business, funders, and civic leaders using public awareness efforts, advocacy and public policy influence. GEEARS' vision is that, by 2020, every student in Georgia will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by third grade. www.geears.org.