



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIGHT FOR CHILDREN LAUNCHES READY TO LEARN DC

INITIATIVE AIMS TO ENSURE ALL DC CHILDREN ARE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN BY 2014

Washington, DC [February 11, 2011] – [Fight For Children](#), whose mission is to ensure that low-income children in Washington, DC receive a great education, today launched Ready to Learn DC, a multifaceted initiative aimed at ensuring school readiness among DC’s youngest residents. Through a variety of programs and partnerships, Ready to Learn DC will increase the number of high-quality, early childhood education programs in Washington, DC, while helping parents better understand the attributes of a quality preschool and how to choose the school best suited for their child.

“We believe all kids in DC deserve a quality education—whether they are four or 14. Today we are thrilled to roll out Ready to Learn DC to ensure the momentum in education we are seeing in Washington touches all children regardless of age or income,” said Michela English, President & CEO of Fight For Children. “We have carefully planned Ready to Learn DC to educate parents in a thoughtful way about why a quality early childhood education matters so much, while help early childhood providers throughout the city strengthen the quality of their programs.”

Fight For Children estimates that 7,000, or 49%, of DC’s three and four-year old children are enrolled in a high quality early childhood education program, while 5,300 DC children are enrolled in programs that may not be high quality, and 2,000 are not enrolled at all even though there may be a slot available to them. To address these challenges, the DC Council unanimously passed Mayor Gray’s landmark Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Act of 2008 that seeks to improve the quality of and expand access to pre-k education programs across multiple sectors, including public schools, public charter schools, and community-based organizations. Fight For Children believes Ready to Learn DC will be an important driver of the city’s efforts to ensure that all of DC’s children are prepared for success in elementary school and beyond.

“Ensuring school readiness among our city’s youngest citizens is not only the right thing to do morally, it is vital to our city’s long term economic fortunes,” said Mayor Vincent Gray. “I am thrilled that an organization like Fight For Children with its proven track record is taking on this critical issue. I look forward to working closely with them over the next four years.”

At its launch, the major components of Ready to Learn DC will include a **website** (www.readytolearndc.org) and a **free video** to educate parents about the importance of a quality early childhood education, how to choose and enroll in a preschool, and how to stay engaged in their children’s education. The video will be distributed widely in DC’s Wards 7 and 8 in early February, and is currently available on the Ready to Learn DC website. The video was produced with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

A key part of Fight For Children’s strategy with Ready to Learn DC is to collaborate with other high performing organizations that share Fight For Children’s commitment to ensuring school readiness. Fight For Children is proud to announce \$700,000 in grants to two important Ready to Learn partners:

AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation. In July 2010, AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation was awarded a \$5 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) fund for its Every Child Ready project. The i3 grant required a 20% private sector match, and Fight For Children became the lead local funding partner for this program, committing \$500,000 over five years. Fight For Children will collaborate with AppleTree on the dissemination of its Every Child Ready materials.

Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC). Fight For Children committed \$200,000 over two years to CNMC. The two organizations are collaborating on a multi-year pilot program to help reduce and prevent obesity in three and four-year old children from the Kenilworth-Parkside neighborhood in Ward 7. Obesity among young children is a key deterrent to a successful transition from early childhood to elementary school. CNMC will work with teachers, care

providers and over two dozen parents in a comprehensive program for prevention and treatment of childhood obesity.

Through the Ready to Learn DC program, Fight For Children will make additional grants in 2011 to enhance and grow the quality of early childhood education in DC. The majority of these grants will be made to organizations working in Wards 7 and 8.

Fight For Children, founded in 1990 by business and civic leader Joseph E. Robert, Jr., is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to ensuring that low-income children in the District of Columbia receive a great education and stay healthy so they can learn. Since its founding, Fight For Children has raised or leveraged over \$450 million for education and healthcare programs serving low-income children in Washington, DC. Fight For Children's fundraising events and other initiatives have directly raised \$100 million. An additional \$350 million in federal funding for DC education programs has resulted from the combined efforts of Fight For Children staff and Joe Robert.

For more information on Fight For Children or any of its programs, visit www.fightforchildren.org.

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