

Communicating With Your Legislator

Our state senators, representatives and governor need to hear why the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program is important to you. Only you, as a T.E.A.C.H. participant, can tell the legislators and Governor Crist what kind of impact the program has had on you personally, the children and families you serve and your center. By writing, you help educate lawmakers on the importance of quality child care and professional development.

How can you tell your story?

- Write a letter (Include a picture of yourself with the children in your class)
- Send an email
- Call them on the telephone
- Invite your legislators to your child care program
- Visit their offices - Remember to make an appointment

These are some topics you may want to consider when telling your story:

- Share how your education has changed and improved the way you care for children
- Tell about the ways children benefit from your education
- Tell about the ways parents benefit from your education
- Explain why you believe education is important for early child care providers
- Explain why financial support from T.E.A.C.H. is necessary
- Describe the challenges you have in facing low wages and a lack of benefits

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear (Senator/Representative/Governor):

I am a participant in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program. *(In your own words, describe how T.E.A.C.H. has benefited you and your family and the children/families you serve. You can include personal examples of how T.E.A.C.H. has made it possible for you to provide better education and guidance to young children. Explain the importance of personal growth and development and how the program has allowed you to pursue a career in child care.)*

I would like to express my support for increasing funds to the early child care field. Quality child care is a direct result of educated child care providers. T.E.A.C.H. links training, compensation and commitment to improving the quality of early childhood care and education and makes it possible for teachers to stay in the field they love.

Sincerely,

(your name)

Here are a few tips for effective communication:

- **Identify yourself** — Include your name and address on the letter/email and type or write legibly so they can quickly read your letter. Let the legislator know you live in his/her district.
- **Identify your subject** — In the first paragraph state the name of the issue, program or legislation that concerns you. Be friendly and give as much praise as possible. This reminds them you are watching what they do.
- **State your position** — Explain how a specific decision will affect you, your family and the early childhood industry.
- **Be reasonable** — Ask for the legislator's support or opposition. Be firm, confident and positive.
- **Keep it short** — Make your letter/email a page or less and quickly get to what you want.
- **Ask for a reply** — Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply regarding his/her position on the issue.
- **Stationery** — Write on personal stationery or plain paper if your employment letterhead is not appropriate. Remember to put your return address on the letter, not just the envelope.
- **Do not use form letters** — Make your message personal and state how the issues relate to you.

To find out who your legislators are go to www.leg.state.fl.us, check your local phone book or call your T.E.A.C.H. counselor.

Please send T.E.A.C.H. a copy of your letters/emails. We often use quotes from these letters in promotional materials and newsletters.