Ohio to Participate in Early Childhood Symposium

4.30.08

As part of an effort to build states' capacity for developing science-based policies that enhance children's learning, behavior and health, 14 states have been selected to participate in the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child and the National Conference of State Legislatures, which comprise the Partnership for Early Childhood

Science and Policy, will jointly convene the symposium at Harvard June 26-27.

Besides Ohio, the other states participating include Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington. The states' teams, which include legislators, lieutenant governors, gubernatorial policy advisors and business and civic leaders, were selected based on their diverse composition; the clarity of their goals; the capacity of team members to advance state early childhood policy; and the potential for new policies or investments to move forward in a collaborative, bipartisan manner with public-private support.

"Governors' offices around the country embrace this opportunity to learn and work together with the legislative branch, early childhood experts and business leaders to improve the lives of children in their states," said John Thomasian, director of the NGA Center. "Many governors have made early childhood issues a high priority, and that's reflected in the number and quality of teams coming to the symposium."

The symposium will bring the state teams together with world-renowned researchers to learn about recent advances in neuroscience, molecular biology, medicine and developmental psychology, which collectively form an integrated science of early childhood development.

Symposium plenary sessions will address the science of early childhood and its implications for state birth-to-age- five policies and practices as well as lessons from states working to incorporate science into their policies, including discussions on how private initiatives can leverage public investment. In addition, state teams will participate in breakout sessions to focus on specific needs in their states; delve deeper into specific scientific, programmatic or policy issues; and develop early childhood action plans for their states.

By providing a forum for exchanging knowledge and working together, the symposium aims to help state leaders develop policies that enhance children's well-being and long-term outcomes while laying a solid foundation for economic prosperity, healthy lives and strong communities. The event is supported by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund.

For more information, visit www.nga.org/center/earlychild.

Ohio's delegation, according to Alicia Leatherman, director of the governor's Early Childhood Cabinet, includes herself plus John Stanford, executive assistant to the governor for education policy; Susan Zelman, state superintendent of public instruction; Dr. Alvin Jackson, director of the Ohio Department of Health; Rep. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron); Liz Connolly, deputy chief of staff of the Ohio Senate; Marcia Egbert, George Gund Foundation; and Gayle Channing-Tenenbaum, of Public Children Service Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and Voices for Ohio's Children.