

power, including the power and example of our founding ideals. That is why I have consistently supported the declassification of today's report. No nation is perfect. But one of the strengths that makes America exceptional is our willingness to openly confront our past, face our imperfections, make changes, and do better. Rather than another reason to refigh-

old arguments, I hope that today's report can help us leave these techniques where they belong: in the past. Today is also a reminder that upholding the values we profess doesn't make us weaker, it makes us stronger, and that the United States of America will remain the greatest force for freedom and human dignity that the world has ever known.

Remarks at the White House Summit on Early Education December 10, 2014

The President. Thank you. Hey! Give Alajah—give Alajah a big round of applause. Thank you so much. Everybody have a seat.

Now, Alajah clearly knows where power is. [Laughter] She knows who has clout and who does not. You did a wonderful job. I'm so proud of you. Good job.

Student Alajah Lane of West Education Campus in Washington, DC. Thank you.

The President. You're welcome. [Laughter] In addition to Alajah, we have some important personages here. I want to thank, first of all, America's Secretary of Education—somebody who is so passionate about making sure every child gets a chance in this country—Arne Duncan. Where's Arne? We've got some of early education's strongest supporters in Congress from both parties who are here. We've got Bob Casey from the great State of Pennsylvania. We've got Representatives Richard Hanna—where's Richard? There he is—Jared Polis, Bobby Scott.

I want to thank the business leaders and philanthropists and mayors, all who came here from across America to make big new commitments to our kids. And I know we've got thousands of parents and teachers and alumni from Head Start and Early Head Start watching this live in New Orleans and Fort Lauderdale. So please give them a shout-out as well. Thank you, guys.

Now, you may know that last week brought some good economic news, building on the momentum that we've seen over the past couple of years. Over the first 11 months of 2014, our economy has created more jobs than in any full year since the 1990s. So, already—we've

still got a month to go—we've already seen more jobs created this year than any time in over a decade. Over the last 4 years, America has put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. Overall wages are rising again, which is a welcome sign for millions of families. So, for all the work we have left to do, America is outpacing most of the world. And if we seize this moment, we have the chance to lead the next century just like we led the last one and make sure that citizens in this country, our children, can have a better life than we did.

But in order to reach our full potential, kids like Alajah need a chance to reach their full potential. Because what makes America exceptional isn't just the size of our economy or the—our influence around the globe. That is a byproduct of a more fundamental fact about America: the promise we make to our children; the idea that no matter who they are, what they look like, where they start, how much their parents earn, they can make it if they try. It's the essential promise of America, that where you start should not and will not determine how far you can go.

And we're here today because it's never too early in a child's life to begin delivering on that promise. I'm preaching to the choir now, but I'm going to go ahead and preach. [Laughter] Study after study shows that children who get a high-quality early education earn more over their lifetimes than peers who don't. They're more likely to finish school. They're less likely to go to prison. They're more likely to hold a job. They're more likely to start a stable family of their own, which means that you have a

generational transmission of the early starts that kids can get. Early education is one of the best investments we can make not just in a child's future, but in our country. It's one of the best investments we can make.

Today my Council of Economic Advisers is putting out a report showing that for every dollar we invest now, we can save more than \$8 later on, by boosting graduation rates, increasing earnings, reducing violent crime. And the study also shows that access to high-quality, affordable childcare means more employment and higher incomes for working parents, especially working moms. Not surprising there. I mean, men, we're getting better, but—[laughter]—we're not where we need to be. And moms, all too often, are juggling between work and childcare. When we have good, high-quality early childhood education, then suddenly, we're freeing up everybody to be on the field.

So early education is a win for everybody. It saves taxpayer dollars. It gives our children a better chance. And some States are proving that it's possible to give every child that chance. For 16 years, every child in Oklahoma has been guaranteed a preschool education. Georgia is building on their successful preschool program by launching something called "Talk With Me Baby"—which sounds like an Al Green song, but is actually—[laughter]—I'm not singing. I'm not. But it's actually a program to make sure make sure language learning begins at the very first weeks of a child's life. Now, let's face it, Oklahoma and Georgia are not places where I do particularly well politically. They're not known as wild-eyed liberal States. But it just goes to show you that this is an issue that's bigger than politics. It's not a red issue or a blue issue, it's about doing what's best for our kids, for our country, and that's an American issue. And we've had some terrific Republican as well as Democratic Governors and mayors who have really taken leadership on this issue because they recognize it's a good investment.

And that's why, in my 2013 State of the Union Address, I laid out a plan to make sure our children have every opportunity they deserve from the moment they are born. And I

asked Congress to work with me to make high-quality pre-K available to every 4-year-old in America. Now, Congress hasn't gotten that done yet, but Democrats and Republicans came together to take some steps in the right direction, with new grants that will expand preschool for children across the country.

And in the nearly 2 years since I called on Congress to take action, we've seen 34 States, along with cities and communities across our country, take action on their own. All told, they're invested—they've invested more than a billion dollars in our children. In Michigan, a Republican Governor signed the nation's second largest State budget increase for early education into law. Last month, voters in Denver approved a ballot measure to renew and expand their preschool program through 2026. In New York, Mayor de Blasio made pre-K for all a centerpiece of his campaign. And this year, more than 50,000 children are enrolled in New York City preschools, more than twice as many as in 2013. So—[applause]—must be a New Yorker here.

So we're making progress. But here's the thing: For all the progress we've made, for all the children who are on a better path, today, fewer than 3 in 10 4-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality preschool. It's not that working parents don't want their kids to be in safe, high-quality learning environments every day. It's that they can't afford the costs of private preschool. And for poor children who need it most, the lack of access to a great preschool can affect their entire lives. We've got kids in this country who are every bit as talented as Malia and Sasha, but they're starting out the race a step behind. And they deserve better. And the whole country will do better if we fix that. So that's what this day is all about.

I'm pleased to announce that my administration will award \$750 million of new investment in our youngest Americans. Secretary Duncan is awarding \$250 million in new Preschool Development Grants to 18 States. We're giving tens of thousands more children the opportunity to go to high-quality preschool. Almost 3,000 preschool students in Nevada, for example, will be able to attend full-

day preschool, instead of a half-day program. Montana will create new high-quality preschool programs that will serve kids in 16 communities, including eight communities on Indian lands.

And in order to create a full pipeline of learning programs, from birth all the way to the beginning of kindergarten, Secretary Burwell is announcing the winners of a \$500 million competition that will bring early care and education to more than 30,000 infants and toddlers next year. So our children—childcare centers will partner with our Early Head Start Centers to help kids from virtually every State, from rural Virginia to my hometown of Chicago.

So we're stepping up, but as all of you I'm sure have already heard, investing in our kids is not just the job of the Federal Government, it's the job of all of us. So, in my State of the Union Address this year, I promised to pull together a coalition of elected officials and business leaders and philanthropists who were willing to help more kids access the high-quality preschool that they need. And here you are. [*Laughter*]

Today we are delivering on that promise with a new campaign called "Invest in Us." I want to highlight a few commitments that have been made by people in this room because I think it shows how much interest there is in this issue, how much evidence there is behind making the kinds of investments for our kids that we're talking about.

So, first of all, you're bringing entire communities together on behalf of children. In Northeast Ohio, for example, Cuyahoga County, the city of Cleveland, local schools, businesses, foundations, and child welfare agencies have all embraced a single plan to ensure that all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to high-quality education. So today the greater Cleveland community is announcing \$10.2 million in new investments in early childhood programs. And that's going to make a difference. Susie Buffett is leading an effort that will invest \$15 million in Omaha. That's making a difference, bringing folks together.

Second, as important as preschool is, you're working to make sure a great education starts even earlier. The George Kaiser Family Foun-

ation reaches out to new parents in Tulsa with a hospital visit before the baby even goes home. After that, they provide parenting classes and literacy programs all the way through a child's third birthday, because they believe that every parent can be a teacher and every home can be a preschool. And as a consequence, they're committing \$25 million, in additional dollars, to help achieve that goal.

Number three, you're supporting early education programs that we already have. So the Foundation for Child Development is working with the New York City Department of Education to help train early-learning teachers. Disney is giving away \$55 million worth of books and apps for young learners. And judging by trick or treating here at the White House this year, if Disney wanted to throw in some of those princess costumes from "Frozen," that will make a difference. [*Laughter*] I mean, there were a lot of Elsas. They just kept on coming, sort of nonstop. [*Laughter*]

And finally, you're investing in new, innovative approaches that have the chance to transform the way we teach our children. So, thanks to neuroscientists and psychologists and child development experts, we know more about how young minds work than ever before. So we've got the Bezos Family Foundation announcing a \$5 million commitment to turn these new insights into new tools for teachers and parents so that our children get the most out of the time and money that we invest in them. And J.B. Pritzker and M.K. Pritzker, their Family Foundation is committing \$25 million to build on cutting-edge research to help our most vulnerable children succeed.

So, all told, in addition to what we're going to be doing at the Federal level, organizations here today are making more than \$330 million in new commitments. [*Applause*] That's worth applauding. And that's pretty extraordinary. That's real money. Even in Washington, that's real money. [*Laughter*] But it's also just the beginning. So I'm calling on all Americans across our country to make their own commitments to our children. And I'm asking our Members of Congress for their commitment as well. Outside Washington, giving our children a fair

shot from the earliest age is a priority that crosses party lines. So I hope that the new Congress next year will work with me to make pre-K available for all of our kids. It will not just grow the economy for everybody, it will change young lives forever.

Just ask Chuck Mills. Where is Chuck? Chuck is here. There's Chuck, right there. Chuck was born in 1962, youngest of six children, raised by a single mom. A lot of the kids in the neighborhoods where Chuck grew up did not finish school, and a lot of those young people ended up in prison. But in 1966, Chuck's mom saw a flier at a church for a new program called Project Head Start. Chuck became part of just the second class of Head Start students, and 2 years later, he had learned so much that he skipped kindergarten and went straight to first grade. And Chuck's been overachieving ever since. [Laughter] Graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, Captain Mills piloted Marine One for two different Presidents. That is something that you want the best people for. [Laughter] Today, Chuck is the founder and CEO of not one, but two companies in Northern Virginia. "My life," Chuck said, "can be summed up in the words, 'Wasn't supposed to.'"

"Wasn't supposed to." Well, that's not just Chuck's story; that's America's story. America is a nation that "wasn't supposed to." Our entire story is improbable. All of us are here be-

cause this country gave someone in our family a chance to beat the odds. None of us were supposed to. Those of us lucky enough to share in this country's promise now have a responsibility to ensure that for all the young people coming behind us who aren't supposed to, that they have those same opportunities.

There are a whole bunch of Chucks out there, all across the country. We have to invest in them. We have to invest in our communities. We have to invest in us. And if we do that, if we give every child the same chance that we got, then America will remain the greatest nation on Earth. And I thank all of you for the extraordinary efforts you are making in fulfilling that promise. All right?

Thank you, and God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Richard D. Snyder of Michigan; Susan A. Buffett, chairman, Sherwood Foundation; J.B. Pritzker, cofounder and managing partner, Pritzker Group, in his capacity as president of the Pritzker Family Foundation, and his wife Mary Kathryn "M.K." Pritzker; Potomac Falls, VA, resident Charlie H. Mills III; and former Presidents George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton.

Remarks at the Toys for Tots Distribution Center at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling

December 10, 2014

The President. Ho, ho, ho!

The First Lady. [Laughter] That's a pretty serious ho, ho, ho.

The President. Ho, ho, ho.

The First Lady. How is everybody doing?

The President. She's doing good.

The First Lady. Happy holidays, merry Christmas.

The President. Merry Christmas.

The First Lady. How are all the kids? Yay. Well, we're happy to be back. As you can see, I

brought a little help this year. So I'm excited—welcome to Toys for Tots. Your first year. We're going to break you in slowly, okay?

But let me start—we're not going to talk long because we're here to actually do some work. But I want to just thank everybody who has been involved in this effort. Of course, Lieutenant General Osman, who has just been a tremendous partner for so many years. His leadership is really at the heart of what makes this drive possible.