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**Business Leaders Call for Universal Pre-Kindergarten
CED Report Urges Investment in America's Young Children**

WASHINGTON D.C., FEBRUARY 5, 2002- A group of business and education leaders today called for free, high quality preschool education for all children age 3 and over who have not yet entered kindergarten. In *Preschool for All: Investing in a Productive and Just Society*, the nonpartisan CED recommends that preschool be made available through a variety of providers for all children whose parents want them to participate. To achieve this goal, CED is calling on the business community to help build public understanding about the economic and social need for early childhood education in the United States.

“While the U.S. debates over increasing its investment in early education, many industrialized countries are already far surpassing us,” said Charles Kolb, CED President. “One of the goals of the 1989 Education Summit of the President and the nation’s governors was to ensure that all children start school ready to learn. While we have progressed in areas such as testing and accountability, strong bipartisan support of early education has yet to be achieved.”

CED’s report stresses that helping all children start school ready to learn is critical to their future success and to the well-being of society as a whole. “Research demonstrates that prekindergarten age children have a much greater capacity to learn than was previously realized,” said Roy J. Bostock, Chairman, B/Com³ Group, Inc., and Co-chair, CED Education Subcommittee. “Early education offers long-term benefits for both children and for society, benefits that can substantially offset the costs involved.”

Preschool for All sees a strong state/federal partnership as the most timely and equitable means of accomplishing the goal of universal access to preschool. States should be responsible for ensuring the availability of prekindergarten programs, while the federal and state governments should share responsibility for financing early learning.

CED recommends that states take the lead in:

- (1) Expanding preschool opportunities,
- (2) Ensuring that the necessary teachers and facilities are available, and
- (3) Integrating a diverse array of preschool providers and programs into coherent systems that meet the educational needs of young children, while addressing child care needs of working parents.

The federal government should also provide incentives for and assistance to states constructing high-quality early learning systems. The report recommends encouraging states to develop strategic plans and timetables for implementing preschool programs that meet acceptable standards by:

- (1) Creating a new federal-to-state grant program to help underwrite financial help for lower-income families,
- (2) Helping states build early education infrastructure to provide access for all children, and
- (3) Creating an independent body to certify acceptable standards for early education.

The report proposes that financial responsibility for preschool be equally shared by the federal and state governments, with today's parental costs scaled back over time. Once fully phased-in, CED estimates that annual public expenditures would need to be at least \$25 to \$35 billion above current spending levels to extend access to free, part-day, part-year preschool programs to all children age 3 and up. Additional investments to improve staff and facilities and provide technical assistance and monitoring would also be necessary.

Preschool for All: Investing in a Productive and Just Society is available from the Committee for Economic Development, 477 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022, telephone - (212) 688-2063 (dial ext. 229 to order), fax - (212) 758-9068. The full text of the report will be available on our website, www.ced.org, after the release.

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CED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of more than 200 business leaders and university presidents. Since 1942, its research and policy programs have addressed many of the nation's most pressing economic and social issues, including education reform, workforce competitiveness, campaign finance, health care, and global trade and finance. CED promotes policies to produce increased productivity and living standards, greater and more equal opportunity for every citizen, and an improved quality of life for all.