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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON NATIONAL EVALUATION OF  
EARLY READING FIRST**

*Program Receives Mixed Reviews*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, released the following statement in response to the National Evaluation of Early Reading First by the Institute of Education Services.

“Helping our youngest children develop their early literacy and language skills is at the heart of the Early Reading First program. Congress should continue its commitment to this important goal, but today’s evaluation suggests that much more needs to be done to strengthen this essential program.

Early Reading First has encouraged promising practices in early childhood classrooms and greatly expanded the amount of training available to early childhood teachers. Today’s study also raises important questions about the scope and quality of that training, and suggests little evidence of its effect on child outcomes. Early Reading First has produced encouraging progress in helping children recognize letters and words, but has done little to promote progress on other important elements of early literacy and language.

As Congress reauthorizes the No Child Left Behind Act, I’m committed to exploring new and innovative ways to ensure that Early Reading First makes a difference for those children who need it the most. It’s clear that we need better training and interventions for teachers in the program, higher-quality support for those children furthest behind, and new investments in the social and emotional skills so important to learning in the early years.”