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**LeVar Burton Speaks Today, Championing Early Literacy Program Serving  
65,000 Low-Income Children in Los Angeles**

*'Literacy for Life' luncheon highlights Little by Little School Readiness Program and  
honors health leaders Drs. Jonathan Fielding and Neal Kaufman*

**Los Angeles, California:** Host of PBS' Reading Rainbow and lifelong children's literacy advocate, LeVar Burton, will address over 200 legislators, philanthropists, education and public health leaders today at the City Club in LA, highlighting the income-related disparity in kindergarten readiness. The Little by Little School Readiness Program (LBL), an evidence-based early literacy initiative, created by nonprofit Heluna Health, will be the focus of an inaugural 'Literacy for Life' luncheon, emphasizing the need for national investments in early literacy.

Research shows low-income children fall behind in literacy skills extremely early. A study by Hart and Risley found that by age three, children in lower-income families hear 30 million fewer words than children in higher-income families, a disparity called the '30 million word gap.' As a result, poorer children often test lower on school readiness scores than wealthier kids; the gap continues throughout life, affecting graduation rates, income and health. LBL addresses this gap by reaching families served through the WIC program in Los Angeles County.

"The goal of Little by Little is to level the playing field for American children by giving low-income kids an equal chance at success in school and in life," says Dr. Blayne Cutler, CEO of Heluna Health, the nonprofit agency that created LBL. "We are honored to have LeVar Burton lend his esteemed voice to the call for scaling evidence-based programs like LBL across the country." Former LA County Public Health Director, Dr. Jonathan Fielding, and pediatrician, Dr. Neal Kaufman, prior First 5 LA Commissioners and early champions of Little by Little, will also be honored.

**About Little by Little:** LBL creates a stimulating home environment, fosters literacy, and improves school readiness for over 65,000 low-income children annually. The program delivers a cost efficient (\$52/child/year), high-impact program through WIC centers. It is a program of Heluna Health, funded by First 5 LA. Visit [www.lblreaders.org](http://www.lblreaders.org).

**About Heluna Health:** Heluna Health is a national leader in providing program and support services to optimize population health. The agency offers a full range of program development, personnel, financial and grant management support to researchers, consortia, government agencies and nonprofits. Visit [www.helunahealth.org](http://www.helunahealth.org).

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