

learn in a high-quality program.

Our bill also takes an important step to suspend the Head Start National Reporting System.

Four years ago, many of us insisted that instead of rushing forward with a national test of hundreds of thousands of children, Head Start would be better served if plans were developed more deliberately to ensure an appropriate means to gather and report child outcomes in programs. That appeal was ignored, and the Administration proceeded with an assessment – without sufficient authorization or oversight from Congress – that was later proven flawed and inconsistent with professional standards for testing and measurement.

This legislation requires that the assessments used in Head Start must be held to the highest standard. Head Start's measures must be valid and reliable, fair to children from all backgrounds, balanced in what they assess, and sufficient to reflect the development of the whole child. We've called on the National Academy of Sciences to survey and study the state of assessments and outcomes appropriate for young children in environments like Head Start. Their study will be of great value as we consider how best to move forward in Head Start and other early childhood settings.

Finally, the bill maintains the essential federal-to-local structure of Head Start, and rejects other proposals that would dilute this important focus. Head Start's design enables it to tailor its services to meet local community needs. Head Start's regulations guarantee a universal standard of quality across all programs. Yet each program is unique and specifically adapted to its children and families. The focus on local neighborhoods and their children must always be at the heart of Head Start.

One of our highest priorities in Congress is to expand educational opportunities for every American. In this age of globalization, every citizen deserves a chance to acquire the educational skills needed to compete in the modern economy. This process starts early – it begins at birth and continues throughout the early years, long before children enter kindergarten.

The Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 will keep Head Start on its successful path, and enable this vital program to continue to thrive and improve. I look forward to swift passage of this legislation in the Senate, and a productive Conference with the House on the important reforms in this bill.

### **Head Start for School Readiness Act Key Policy Highlights**

#### **Expanded Access**

- Expands eligibility to Head Start programs for additional low-income children and families (up to 130% of the federal poverty guideline).
- Doubles the Early Head Start set-aside (currently 10%; would phase up to 20% over 5 years).
- Ensures funds for Indian Head Start (4% minimum set-aside) and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (5% minimum set-aside).
- Increases overall authorization of program (\$7.3 billion in FY08; \$7.6 billion in FY09; \$7.9 billion in FY10; such sums in FY11 and FY12).

#### **Focus on School Readiness**

- Supports Head Start programs in aligning standards and services with state early learning standards.

- Suspends and terminates the flawed Head Start National Reporting System (national test).
- Supports the National Academy of Sciences review of child outcomes and assessments, based on gold-standard research.
- Strengthens transition of Head Start children to school.

### **Strengthened Workforce**

- Dedicates 1% of total Head Start funds to Head Start grantees, for local training and technical assistance efforts.
- Establishes new goals (no requirements or penalties) for the Head Start teaching workforce:
  - All Head Start teachers nationwide must have an Associate's degree in 5 years;
  - Half of all teachers in each state must have a Bachelor's degree in 6 years;
  - All Head Start curriculum specialists must have at least a Bachelor's degree in 5 years; and
- All Head Start assistant teachers must have at least a child development associate credential in 5 years.
- Guarantees training and creates a career ladder for every Head Start employee.
- Provides on-going literacy training for Head Start teachers to promote the development of children's pre-reading skills.

### **Expanded State Role**

- Creates a new State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education in every state. Activities include an inventory of children's needs, plan for statewide professional development for the early childhood education workforce, review of state early learning standards, new areas for collaboration between early childhood programs, and a unified system of data collection.
- Dedicates \$100 million from Head Start appropriations for new competitive incentive grant program to implement state early care and education plans.
- Expands the State Head Start Collaboration Office to focus on assisting Head Start agencies in:
  - Developing partnerships at the local level;
  - Expanding services to children;
  - Coordinating training opportunities for Head Start staff; and
  - Aligning the program with state early learning standards.
- Recognizes and awards bonuses to "Centers of Excellence" that provide exemplary services to Head Start children and families. (New authorization of \$90 million).

### **Greater Accountability**

- Improves monitoring, including unannounced site inspections, mandatory follow-up reviews of centers with deficiencies, and a review of child outcomes in monitoring.
- Ensures the re-competition of grantees that have not resolved program deficiencies (those with demonstrated record of non-compliance with Head Start's program standards).
- Creates a new policy for under-enrollment in programs: (1) standard definition for under-enrollment; (2) technical assistance and corrective action to under-enrolled grantees; and (3) recapturing, reducing or withholding funds associated with under-enrolled slots after 18 months of under-enrollment.

- Requires each Head Start agency to submit an annual audit of administrative expenses in programs to the Secretary.
- Caps the use of Head Start funds to compensate employees in excess of the salary of the Secretary of Health and Human Services (\$168,000).

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