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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON LABOR HHS**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Mr. President, more than any other appropriations bill that we will consider this year, this bill is about the strength and well-being of America's families. It gives our children a chance for a better education. It keeps workers safe and makes sure they are paid a proper and legal wage to support their families. It invests in improved health care to keep our families healthy and strong.

This is what Americans want us to invest in – better education, better jobs and better health care.

But this is not the President's priority. He seems to find unlimited funding for the war in Iraq or tax breaks for the wealthy. But when it comes to the everyday concerns of the middle class and working families – their priorities get a veto. President Bush is all for using American taxpayer dollars to help schools and hospitals in Iraq, but when we try to invest American taxpayer dollars in American schools and American hospitals, they get the veto.

How can we take this President seriously when he says he will leave no child behind when he vetoes funding for education?

How can we take this President seriously when he says he's for children's health when he vetoes funding for health care?

How can we take this President seriously when he announces a new food safety initiative – like he did yesterday – when he says he'll veto funding for food safety?

The President may have the wrong priorities, but here in Congress we've worked together – Democrats and Republicans – to pass responsible new investments in our schools, our health care system and our jobs.

Here is what's at stake if the President vetoes this important legislation. The American people deserve to know which of their priorities fall to the cutting room floor when he rejects this bill.

First and foremost, the bill before us today provides long-overdue funding for education. Over the past few years, the White House and the Republican leadership in Congress have neglected urgently needed new investments for better teachers, stronger schools and college affordability. In fact, under Republican control, funding for the education of our children has gone down.

This bill reverses that course. It delivers on the priorities of American families. It provides \$3.2 billion in new funding for education compared to last year – \$4.5 billion more than in the President’s budget.

The core federal education initiative for helping school children who fall behind is called Title One. Despite all the hype from this Administration about Leave No Child Behind, Title One funding has languished since passage of that legislation.

The education funding bill before us today changes all that. It includes the largest increase in Title I funding since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed – a \$1.5 billion increase. It includes an additional \$375 million increase in funds specifically dedicated to school improvement and funds that program at \$500 million as promised five years ago. In all, it includes nearly \$1.9 billion in increased funding for Title I.

Shamefully, we’ve seen the Pell Grant stagnate as well. For the past five years, students and families have struggled as college costs have skyrocketed.

But a new day has dawned in Congress, and we’re committed to putting the needs of college students and their families first. Paying for college is one of the largest and most important investments that most Americans will make in their entire lives. With this bill, we’re making that burden a little lighter for millions of young Americans.

This legislation provides a \$125 increase in the Pell Grant – bringing the maximum grant to \$4,925. By 2012, the maximum grant will rise to \$5,525.

This bill gets us back on the right course. It delivers a real, new investment in education.

The President should recognize that this bill finally delivers on promises he made to children and families 6 years ago. He should embrace this progress and sign the bill. Instead, the President has threatened to veto the bill and deny this help that our schools so desperately need.

The President is rejecting this bill because it includes \$4.5 billion more for education than the President included in his budget. He has requested \$158 billion for the war in Iraq this year – that’s \$433 million per day. Let’s look at the choices the President is and compare them to the choices of American families which are reflected in the bill before us:

\$500 million to help our struggling schools to turn around.

American families want to use those funds helping the 9,000 schools in most need of improvement to strengthen education for all of their students.

But the President says no.

\$3 billion to improve the quality of our teachers.

American families want those funds to be used to hire 30,000 teachers to reduce class sizes so teachers can spend more time with individual students, provide high quality induction programs for 100,000 beginning teachers, AND provide high quality professional development for an additional 200,000 teachers. In Massachusetts, these funds could provide high quality induction and professional development for 10,000 teachers.

But the President says no.

\$7 billion for to provide high quality early education through Head Start.

American families want to use those funds to ensure that nearly 1 million children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. These funds build learning skills that lead to better outcomes for low-income and minority children, including improved high school graduation rates and eventual college enrollment rates.

But the President says no.

This bill also provides the needed resources for programs and research to protect and improve the public health of all Americans. As you know the Department of Health and Human Services is the nation's principal health care agency, especially for those who are least able to help themselves.

Community Health Centers make quality health care possible for millions of Americans who cannot afford health insurance. A veto of the \$2 billion for community health centers included in this bill would mean that 15 million low income people would be denied their opportunity for health care.

Another way to invest in our nation's public health system is to support research by our scientists at the National Institutes of Health to encourage innovative discoveries that will lead us to cure devastating diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Research on every major disease priority will be affected, but let me just mention two. The President plans to veto nearly \$5 billion for cancer research, which would fund over 6,800 grants. He will veto \$1.75 billion for diabetes research, denying nearly 4,000 grants. In this era of life sciences breakthroughs, it is irresponsible to deny these major opportunities for progress against disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention works to protect the health and safety of the nation. A presidential veto will mean that key initiatives to tackle chronic diseases will be under funded.

The \$500 million for immunization services, to protect children and adults from potentially deadly diseases, would also be gone. Gone at the stroke of the President's pen.

A veto of this bill will also hit hard the 49 million Americans with disabilities. It will mean that 15 million Americans will be at risk of losing much-needed treatment for mental illnesses and substance use disorders. 4.5 million individuals with developmental disabilities will not have access to services and supports that help them live and work in their communities.

A veto would also be devastating to workers on the job. With globalization and layoffs and corporations cutting benefits, Americans are worried enough about their jobs. The least we can do is make sure they're safe on the job and that they are not ripped off by their employers. And this bill provides the funds needed to enforce the labor laws designed to protect American jobs and American workers.

Every year, more than 5,700 workers lose their lives at work. We need look no further than the tragic on-the-job deaths of six miners and three rescue workers at Crandall Canyon in August to see the importance of adequate safety enforcement. That's why we need to provide more support to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Mine Safety and Health Administration, which set safety standards, conduct inspections, and enforce our safety and health laws.

This bill provides significant and needed increases over the President's request for both agencies to help them complete their vital missions.

And what about American workers who try to upgrade their skills to compete and win in the global economy?

The President proposed a cut of \$539 million to job training. But this bill says we should not cast workers aside. It rejects the President's cuts and includes \$2.9 billion for job training.

On issue after issue, priority after priority, this bill stands with the needs of our families, our children and our workers.

I urge the President to stand with them, too, and sign this bill.

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