

ADDITIONAL REPUBLICAN VIEWS

Head Start was established in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the War on Poverty and is one of the nation's most popular domestic programs. The program provides educational and other support services to prepare extremely low-income children for school. Head Start is the federal government's largest effort to prepare the nation's most disadvantaged children for school.

Head Start provides a range of services, including education, nutrition, health, and parent training, to over 900,000 children and their families living in poverty. Federal Head Start funds are provided directly to local grantees, rather than through States. Programs are locally designed and administered by a network of more than 1,600 public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies, or grantees operating about 2,600 programs nationwide. Grantees are required to reserve at least ten percent of their slots for children with disabilities. In 1994, Early Head Start was established to serve pre-natal mothers and infants and toddlers under the age of three.

Committee Republicans are pleased that H.R. 1429, the *Improving Head Start Act of 2007*, reforms Head Start to improve the overall school readiness of disadvantaged children. Similar to H.R. 2123, the *School Readiness Act of 2005* introduced by Congressman Mike Castle (R-DE) and approved by the House in 2005, improving school preparedness and teacher quality are key components of H.R. 1429. Head Start research shows that participating children are making progress yet continue to fall short of expectations by lagging behind their more affluent peers in some domains of achievement. Eliminating academic and developmental disparities early on is an important goal of this legislation given the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, which mandate that children read on grade level by the end of third grade.

We are pleased that H.R. 1429 addresses many Republican priorities and that the bill was developed through bipartisan negotiation. However, we are concerned that the bill does not adequately protect the civil liberties of faith-based organizations participating or seeking to participate in Head Start. Committee Republicans strongly supported an amendment offered by Congressman Luis Fortuño, which the Democrats opposed, to protect these rights.

Enhancing the School Readiness of Head Start Children

Knowledge about children's learning has expanded greatly during the past two decades. Research in the neurobiological and behavioral sciences suggests the importance of a child's experiences during the first years of life for healthy brain development. From birth through age five, children rapidly develop the capabilities on which subsequent development builds.

While the resources to fund Head Start are significant, more work is needed to achieve the ultimate program goal of closing the readiness gap between Head Start children and their more advantaged peers when they enter kindergarten. Studies indicate that children who are enrolled in Head Start make progress, but still are lagging behind national norms in all aspects of school readiness. Data from the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) and the first year findings of the Head Start Impact study both suggest that Head Start participants show

progress on some measures after completion of a year in Head Start, but on balance remain below the national average. However, FACES data finds the achievement gap has been closed in the areas of pre-reading and pre-writing by the time Head Start children complete kindergarten. The Committee looks forward to future reports from the Impact study to see if these results are replicated.

To accomplish the goal of ensuring that Head Start children develop the cognitive competencies necessary to succeed, the *Improving Head Start Act* enhances program emphasis on the academic components of school readiness, while retaining the commitment to providing comprehensive early learning and social services. Committee Republicans recognize the importance of all domains of development in order for a child to be school ready; however, Head Start is not making good on its promise if Head Start children are not fully prepared to enter school.

A critical component of school readiness is the attainment of pre-reading abilities. As such, Head Start programs should provide children from low income families a high-quality, oral language and literature-rich environment. Through scientific research, much has been learned about the way children learn to read and the strong foundation that is important before children are given formal reading instruction in kindergarten and first grade. Head Start must play a pivotal role in this effort. In addition to supporting the socio-emotional development of children under their care, Head Start programs must encourage and promote cognitive development activities along with professional development for teachers and staff based on scientific research in reading.

Committee Republicans also recognize the importance of pre-mathematics and pre-science skills for young children. Promoting pre-mathematics and pre-science knowledge and abilities is important for school readiness. These competencies may be promoted through early science and math experiences, including observing with senses, predicting, inferring, defining and controlling variables, working in teams, and communicating discoveries. Examples of science and math experiences may include planting different seeds, with various types of growing medium, light, and water; building towers with various block sizes; employing ramps and different balls; watching ice melt in different environments, etc.

The *Improving Head Start Act* updates the Head Start quality standards to reflect scientific advances relating to the core areas of competence fundamental to children's school readiness. The new quality standards will require Head Start teachers to ensure that children enrolled in the program develop and demonstrate the following: language knowledge and skills; pre-reading knowledge and skills, including phonological awareness, print awareness and skills, and alphabetic knowledge; mathematics knowledge and skills, such as aspects of classification, seriation, number, spatial relations and time; science knowledge and skills, including measurement; cognitive abilities related to academic achievement; social and emotional development related to early learning, school success, problem-solving, and overall well-being; approaches to learning related to childhood development and early learning; creative arts; and for limited English proficient children, progress toward acquisition of the English language while making meaningful progress towards attaining the same school readiness knowledge and skills as other participating children. Additionally, we are pleased that the *Improving Head Start Act*

eliminates the previous educational performance measures that were arbitrary and misaligned with the school readiness competencies specified under the quality and educational standards section.

Committee Republicans strongly support the definition of scientifically based research and the requirement that Head Start grantees demonstrate the capacity to serve eligible children with programs based on scientifically based research that promotes school readiness and meets quality standards. Consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act, we strongly believe that Head Start programs should be utilizing sound scientifically-based research when making program decisions. The language in H.R. 1429 will ensure that instructional strategies have resulted from the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures; employ systematic empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; involve rigorous data analyses; rely upon measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and have been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. We believe these requirements will lead to improved program quality and better outcomes for the children participating in Head Start.

Teacher Quality

According to the National Research Council report, *Eager to Learn*, all preschool programs should have a teacher with at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field (National Research Council, 2000). Well educated teachers are a key to early childhood program quality and outcomes for children.

Since its inception, the Head Start program has been providing training and professional development to its workers. Today, a certified Child Development Associate, or CDA, is the minimum teacher requirement in every Head Start classroom, and three-quarters of all Head Start teachers have at least an associate's degree in child development or a related field. This is good progress, but the program must build upon this to advance the qualifications of educational staff. Improved academic achievement in Head Start cannot be accomplished without well-qualified Head Start teachers who are trained in child development, utilize research-based literacy techniques, and understand the importance of a language-rich, interactive environment for children.

In 1998, Congress required 50 percent of Head Start teachers nationwide to acquire a minimum of an associate degree by 2008 – a goal that Head Start has successfully met.

The *Improving Head Start Act* sets a new target for teacher qualifications. It requires that by two years after enactment all newly hired Head Start teachers have at least an associate degree or be enrolled in a program leading to an associate degree. Additionally, it would require that half of all Head Start teachers nationwide have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree by September 30, 2013. The bill does not create a requirement for individual programs. This revised requirement would help to make teacher qualifications more consistent with K-12 schools and many state pre-kindergarten programs. Twenty-seven state pre-kindergarten programs, and the District of Columbia, require that all preschool teachers have at least a

bachelor's degree, yet only about 38 percent of Head Start teachers have more than a two-year degree. In some States, the difference in the teacher requirements between Head Start and state school readiness programs can be a barrier to collaboration and integration between the two programs.

H.R. 1429 also requires all Head Start grantees to create a professional development plan for all full-time employees who provide direct educational services to children. The Committee believes that this activity will result in high quality professional development that directly benefits the individual instructor, Head Start students, and the overall program.

The *Improving Head Start Act* provides financial support to achieve higher teacher qualifications. The bill significantly increases the percentage of new dollars that must be spent on quality improvement. In an effort to ensure that Head Start programs are of the highest possible quality, and to ensure that funds are available to assist Head Start reach new requirements for teacher quality, H.R. 1429 requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to reserve 60 percent of all new Head Start funds for purposes of quality improvement. Not less than 25 percent of that 60 percent must be used to increase teacher salaries and assist programs in recruiting and retaining quality staff. Remaining quality improvement funds would be available to provide ongoing professional developing to teachers, improve the qualifications and skills of educational personnel, ensure the physical environments of Head Start programs are conducive to providing effective program services and are accessible, employ additional staff to reduce the child to teacher ratio in the classroom and family to staff ratio for family services workers, ensure programs have qualified staff that can promote language skills and literacy growth, and increase hours of program operation.

Developmental Screening

Head Start currently requires a timely and systematic approach toward diagnostic screening of participating children in order to identify which children require more formal assessments of their developmental needs and follow-up services. The Head Start Program Performance Standards require all grantees and delegate agencies to perform or obtain linguistically and age appropriate screening procedures to identify concerns regarding a child's developmental, sensory, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional skills (CFR 1304.20(b)(1)) within 45 days of the child's entry into the program. However, screenings may be conducted only after a program files a written parental authorization for such services. Though the HHS Performance Standards provide important guidance on characteristics of screening tools, no particular strategy, instrument, or technique is required.

Committee Republicans strongly support language in the *Improving Head Start Act* that reinforces that Head Start program must in every circumstance obtain written parental consent prior to conducting any health related service, including developmental and mental health screenings, and physical examinations.

Program Accountability

While the majority of Head Start grantees provide quality services, there are some grantees that are not fulfilling their obligation to ensure that our nation's neediest children enter school with the knowledge they need to succeed. This is evidenced by the approximately 170 Head Start programs that have been terminated by the Department due to concerns over their quality over the past 10 years.

Since January 2003, media accounts in numerous U.S. cities and communities alleged serious financial abuses and irregularities by local individuals and/or entities entrusted with managing local Head Start programs. Other reports involving financial mismanagement suggested that often Head Start grantees have good intentions, yet lack strong fiscal controls and the skills needed to effectively manage complex, multi-million dollar non-profit organizations. The incidents identified in these media reports collectively involve the use of tens of millions in federal Head Start funds that were intended to serve more than 10,000 disadvantaged U.S. children. These reports suggest that an unacceptable share of Head Start funding never reaches the disadvantaged children the money is intended to serve, and is instead lost to financial abuse, mismanagement, impropriety, or outright theft within the Head Start system.

In light of these reports, the Committee Republicans are concerned about the degree to which Head Start grantees are held accountable at both the federal and local levels. We believe the current Head Start monitoring system is not adequate to ensure that programs are consistently delivering the level of high quality services necessary for children to advance in all areas of development. This is confirmed by a March 2005 report published by the Government Accountability Office that evaluated federal financial controls that exist in the Head Start system.

GAO provided a series of recommendations to hold grantees more fiscally accountable for federal Head Start funds. The GAO urged changes that could be made by HHS/ACF to improve the oversight of the Head Start program. These changes include: (1) implementing a comprehensive risk assessment of the Head Start Program; (2) improving the processes used to collect information on program risks; and (3) making greater use of authority to re-compete the grants that are currently awarded to poorly performing grantees (GAO, 2005). We are pleased that the *Improving Head Start Act* addresses these recommendations and includes several new provisions to ensure greater public disclosure of information and accountability in the use of funds.

Increasing Competition for Head Start Grants

Evidence shows that competition fosters continuous program improvement and high expectations. H.R. 1429 ensures high quality programs continue to provide services in their communities, while providing the Secretary greater authority to replace grantees that are not meeting expectations. In our view, programs that are not proving high quality, comprehensive early education program must not be given a free pass to continue receiving taxpayer funds.

The Improving Head Start Act was crafted to ensure high quality programs continue to provide services in their communities, while programs that are not meeting expectations will be asked to compete for funds. The Secretary will develop and implement a system for application review that integrates the recommendations of an expert panel to determine if a Head Start agency is providing a quality comprehensive early learning program. The Secretary shall base the system of review on annual budget data, triennial Head Start program reviews, annual audits, self-assessments, measurements of classroom quality, and program information reports. Once the system for application evaluation is finalized, the Secretary will use this system to determine which grantees are successfully delivering a high quality comprehensive early education program. Grantees that are determined under such system to be successfully delivering a high quality comprehensive early education program would have their application renewed for a period of five years. Underperforming grantees would be eligible to compete in an open competition for a subsequent Head Start grant.

Competition breeds quality by fostering high expectations. We are concerned about the lack of applicants in current Head Start grant competitions and encourage the Secretary to explore new options and approaches to encourage greater number and diversity of applicants in future Head Start grant competitions. Head Start children deserve to be served by the highest quality program that could be available to them and by increasing the role of competition the *Improving Head Start Act* will accomplish just that.

Local Accountability and Parental Involvement

We are pleased that HR. 1429 maintains the vital role of parents in ensuring the success of Head Start. Committee Republicans support maintaining the policy of shared governance between a parent policy council and a governing body.

To be designated as a Head Start agency, the grantee must establish an independent governing body. Members must include representatives of the local community (including at least one member with significant financial management or accounting experience and one with expertise in early childhood development). Additional members shall be selected for their expertise in education, business administration, community affairs, government, legal affairs, and such other areas of expertise as may contribute to effective governance of the Head Start agency. All members of the board shall receive training in the management responsibilities and obligations, ethics, and financial literacy and management, and shall adopt practices that assure active, independent and informed governance of the Head Start agency, including independent oversight of the financial and management practices of such agency. It is our intent that all legal and fiduciary responsibilities shall rest with the governing board and it shall take action on the recommendations of the policy council.

A Head Start agency must also designate a parent policy council. The council shall be composed of either parents of children currently enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start program or were enrolled the previous year or are members of the community served by the Head Start agency. Parent members shall constitute a majority of the member of the policy council and shall be elected by parents of currently enrolled children. The policy council shall approve and submit to the governing body decisions about the strategic direction of the program,

including long and short-term planning goals and objectives; selection of delegate agencies; recruitment, selection and enrollment priorities; program personnel policies; and other program activities.

The Secretary shall develop policies and procedures describing how Head Start agencies will implement or share decision-making, including a process for resolving any impasse between the two bodies.

Improving Coordination, Collaboration, and Integration

We believe it is critically important to ensure continuity between Head Start and other early childhood programs that exist with increasing frequency in States and local communities in order to ensure that all children have the necessary knowledge to enter school ready to learn. We support efforts in the *Improving Head Start Act* to increase local and State integration of early childhood education by requiring Head Start agencies and local providers of State pre-kindergarten to enter into ongoing partnerships to create an efficient and effective system of early childhood and school readiness services in each State; and authorizing State Early Learning Councils to advance the development of a coordinated early childhood services delivery system in each State.

H.R. 1429 requires Head Start grantees to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with providers, such as LEAs, of State pre-kindergarten programs in their service area in order to better align their activities. Specifically, Head Start grantees, LEAs, and providers of State pre-kindergarten programs are required to coordinate: educational activities, curricula, and instruction aligned to State early learning standards; public information dissemination and access to programs for families; selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs; service delivery areas; staff training, including opportunities for joint staff training on topics such as academic content standards and instructional methods; program technical assistance; provision of additional services to meet the child care needs of working parents; planning and parent education for smooth transitions to kindergarten; provision and use of facilities, transportation, and other program elements; and other elements mutually agreed to by the parties to such memorandum.

H.R. 1429 also attempts to improve the integration of Head Start with other early education services by authorizing funds for establishing or expanding State Early Learning Councils to advance the development of a coordinated delivery system for early childhood services within a State. These State Early Learning Councils will bring together Head Start, State pre-kindergarten programs, State child care programs and the schools that will one day serve the children enrolled in Head Start and other preschool programs.

Early Head Start

Neuroscience suggests that the ages of birth to three is the most critical period for a child's brain growth. It is during this period that children acquire the ability to think, speak, learn, and reason. Disparities in children's cognitive and social abilities become evident well before they enter Head Start or pre-kindergarten programs at age four. Early Head Start

minimizes these disparities and helps to establish the foundation needed for children to enter school ready to learn.

We are encouraged by the positive effects of Early Head Start on child development and parent self-sufficiency, as documented in the evaluation mandated by Congress and completed in 2002. The strong and careful implementation effort from Early Head Start's inception, supported by a national and regional training and technical assistance system with expertise in infant and toddler development contributed to these positive outcomes.

Currently, 10 percent of Head Start funds are allocated specifically for funding the Early Head Start program. Since infants and toddlers have needs different than three and four year olds, operating Early Head Start programs requires different environments and staff trained with the needed expertise in infant and toddler development. Seven hundred Early Head Start programs serve over 71,000 low-income families with infants and toddlers.

H.R. 1429 increases the current set-aside for the program to 20 percent over the course of the authorization, as long as the increase does not diminish funds available for the current Head Start program. The bill also allows current Head Start funds to be converted to Early Head Start programs as long as Early Head Start program requirements are met and the conversion appropriately addresses community needs.

Committee Consideration of H.R. 1429

Protecting Confidentiality

Head Start programs are currently required to measure children's progress in key aspects of development, including language development, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, and physical health and development. Programs are required to evaluate each child's progress three times per year and use the results to help make decisions about staff training, mentoring and supervision; needed improvements in curriculum; reallocation of program resources; and plans for transitions of children from Head Start into elementary schools.

Committee Republicans believe that monitoring children's growth and development throughout the Head Start year can be very helpful to continuous improvement in program quality. But in order for these assessments to provide teachers with useful information that can serve as a basis for teaching decisions, it is important that the self-assessment methods in the areas of emergent literacy and mathematics be research-based, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive. The Committee believes it is important that these assessments be tied to children's daily activities in order to better support educational instruction and decisions about teaching and curricula. The National Academy of Sciences is conducting a study on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children. The Secretary will use this study to guide Head Start agencies in the use of scientifically-based measures to support classroom instructional practices and program evaluation.

While we support these changes, we are concerned about confidentiality of participant records. To address these concerns, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) offered an amendment, accepted by voice vote, to require the Secretary, through regulation, to ensure the confidentiality of any personally identifiable data, information and records collected or maintained by the Secretary and any Head Start agency. Such regulations shall provide the policies, protections and rights equivalent to those provided a parent, student, or educational agency or institution under section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA]). In addition, the amendment ensures that, as measures are revised, the Secretary does not develop a nationwide database of personally identifiable information on children participating in measures under the Head Start program.

The amendment also reaffirms the Head Start program's commitment to parental involvement and oversight by ensuring parents have access to information or records regarding their children and protects the confidentiality of such records. These regulations would need to provide protections and rights equivalent to those provided a parent, student, or educational agency under FERPA. Under FERPA, educational agencies and institutions that receive federal funds must provide parents with access to the educational records of their children within a reasonable time. In addition, FERPA prohibits such agencies from having a policy or practice of releasing the educational records of a student without the written consent of his or her parents. Certain exceptions exist for research-related requests.

Faith-based Initiative

Congressman Luis Fortuño (R-PR) offered an amendment during Committee consideration to protect the rights of religious organizations to hire on a religious basis when they take part in the Head Start program. In addition, the amendment would have protected the governance of such organizations and ensured religious organizations are not discriminated against on the basis of their religious character. The current Head Start act requires faith-based organizations to compromise their identity to compete for federal funds. The amendment was defeated 19 – 26 in Committee, with all Democrats opposing the amendment and Republicans supporting it.

Faith-based organizations such as churches, synagogues, and other faith-based charities, are a central part of the fabric of communities across America. Many of these organizations provide assistance and services to the neediest members of society, offering a helping hand to the least fortunate among us. Many faith-based organizations make a vital contribution to Federal assistance programs.

Recognizing these contributions, President Bush signed an Executive Order on Equal Protection of the Laws for Faith-based and Community Organizations in December 2002. That Executive Order recognizes that the Nation's social service capacity will benefit if all eligible organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations, are able to compete on an equal footing for Federal financial assistance used to support social service programs, like Head Start. This amendment would have codified current practice, as outlined in the President's Executive Order. Similar language already is part of the Community Services Block Grant law and welfare reform law, both of which received bipartisan support.

Head Start already has a proud history of inclusion of faith-based organizations. Approximately 5 percent of Head Start programs are operated by faith-based organizations. Mr. Fortuño's amendment would have ensured that, as new grantees are selected, religious organizations can compete on equal footing with public or private entities without requiring religious organizations to eliminate their religious character in order to participate.

The amendment would have allowed faith-based organizations that participate in the Head Start program to use their facilities to provide services supported with Federal financial assistance, without removing or altering religious art, icons, or other symbols from these facilities. In addition, a faith-based organization that applies for or participates in Head Start could retain its governance structure, which may include having religious terms in its organization's name, selecting its board members on a religious basis, and including religious references in its organization's mission statements and other chartering or governing documents.

Constitutional protections are included. The amendment states that implementation must be consistent with the First Amendment constitutional law. The amendment prohibits funds from being used for worship, instruction or proselytization in keeping with Constitutional requirements. This amendment would not permit religious organizations to refuse to assist individuals on the basis of religion, a religious belief or refusal to participate in a religious practice. The nondiscrimination language of the current Head Start statute prevents discrimination in the provision of service on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, political affiliation, or beliefs.

Through regulations adopted July 16, 2004, the Department of Health and Human Services clarified these protections and required that any organizations that receive direct financial assistance from the Department (such as being a Head Start grantee) may not engage in inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services funded by the Department. While an organization may conduct such activities, the activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs or services funded by the Department, and participation must be voluntary for program beneficiaries. [45 CFR Part 87, Section 87.1(c)] Additionally, these organizations may not, in providing services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion or religious belief. [45 CFR Part 87, Section 87.1(e)]

The amendment also would have made Head Start consistent with the legislation governing other major social service programs by extending the Title VII hiring protections to faith-based organizations participating in Head Start.

When faith-based groups hire employees on a religious basis, they are exercising their civil liberties. The Civil Rights Act made clear when faith-based groups hire employees on a religious basis, it is an exercise of the group's civil liberties and does not constitute "discrimination" under Federal law. Under Section 702(a) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended in 1972 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e-1(a)):

“This subchapter *shall not apply* to an employer with respect to the employment of aliens outside any State, or to a *religious corporation, association, educational institution, or society with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion* to perform work connected with the carrying on by such corporation, association, educational institution, or society of its activities.” (emphasis added).

This language explicitly allows faith-based organizations to hire on a religious basis, and any Federal legislation governing Federal social service funds should continue to protect the rights of religious organizations to hire on a religious basis when they take part in Federal social service efforts.

President Bill Clinton signed four laws that explicitly allow religious organizations to retain their right to staff on a religious basis when they receive federal funds, including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Act; the Community Services Block Grant Act of 1998; the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (the welfare reform law); and the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000. In *Corporation of the Presiding Bishop v. Amos*, a unanimous Supreme Court upheld the freedom to hire those who share the religious organization’s beliefs.

The Fortuño amendment reflects the exact sentiment as did those four laws: that the faith and values that motivate Americans to serve their neighbors should not be held against them. An intolerant attitude that forces faith-based groups to give up who they are because they want to assist their community has no place in this Congress or this country.

State Demonstration

Congressman Tom Price (R-GA) offered an amendment to H.R. 1429 to require the Secretary to allow States to participate in a limited demonstration project by which no more than eight States – who are currently matching 50 percent of the federal commitment with State and local money in an early childhood education program – could voluntarily apply for and receive the option of coordinating Head Start programs with their own early childhood education programs. In order to participate, States would have been required to contribute an additional five percent match, and have standards for education and comprehensive services at least as extensive as those currently found in Head Start. The demonstration would be limited to States with a demonstrated investment in early childhood education and an established, pre-existing preschool system. Participating States would be barred from making funding cuts to early childhood education programs as a condition of their participation. In addition, a “hold harmless” provision was included guaranteeing funding for Head Start centers in participating States for at least the first three years of implementation of the demonstration project.

The amendment is similar to a provision that was included in the House-passed reauthorization bill considered in 2003. The amendment was defeated in Committee.

We believe that the Committee missed an opportunity to make significant reform in the Head Start program by failing to allow this demonstration program. The State Demonstration Program would have provided an important opportunity for 8 States with a proven and effective


system of early childhood education to leverage their experience and improve the school readiness of children in their State.


For years, experts in early childhood education and child development have been calling for a seamless system of early childhood education that integrates the existing patchwork of programs that includes Head Start, Title I pre-kindergarten, child care, and State pre-kindergarten. When Head Start began in 1965, State pre-kindergarten programs did not exist. State investment in pre-kindergarten initiatives has increased significantly in the past ten years as Governors and the public have recognized the importance of early education in preparing children for school. The emergence of State pre-K programs has led to the duplication of services and inconsistent standards for program quality within States. Some States have developed innovative programs and made significant investments so that high-quality early education experiences are available for young children, especially those most at risk of school failure. Since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Governors have an even greater stake in ensuring the school readiness of children. Governors are held accountable for the results of children beginning at the end of the third grade.


Governors have experience. They currently oversee K-12 education; childcare programs operating under the Child Care and Development Block Grant; Title I and State-run preschool; and a variety of other social services programs, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Medicaid that are utilized by Head Start families. However, because States have no authority over the Head Start program, coordination can be challenging and occurs only if individual grantees within a State agree to work with these other players within the larger State system.

Under the current patchwork system, States face many barriers to developing a Statewide school readiness curriculum for all pre-kindergarten programs that is aligned with their Statewide standards for K-12 education. The State Demonstration Program would have provided eligible States with the opportunity to improve coordination of services and operate programs more efficiently, thereby increasing their ability to serve more children. The experiences of these States would have provided valuable information about how States with advanced early childhood education systems are able to innovate and improve results for children. We are disappointed that this demonstration was not given a chance and that this information will not be learned.


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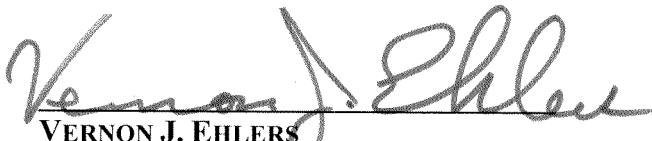

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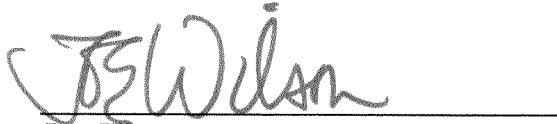

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