



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 1, 2007
(House Rules)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 1429 – Improving Head Start Act of 2007

(Rep. Kildee (D) MI and 26 cosponsors)

The Administration is committed to reauthorizing and improving the Head Start program by continuing efforts to improve school readiness, strengthen grantee oversight and program management, and increase grantee competition to raise program quality. However, the Administration cannot support House passage of H.R. 1429 in its current form.

The Administration appreciates that the House bill includes provisions to increase competition by requiring that all Head Start grantees provide a quality comprehensive early learning program in order to receive priority designation. This will help ensure that Head Start funding supports the most effective, comprehensive services that prepare children for school. The Administration is also pleased that H.R. 1429 requires that grantees maintain full enrollment.

The Administration strongly opposes the termination of the National Reporting System (NRS), which would eliminate the one assessment tool that measures children's progress in Head Start using a consistent methodology. Data from NRS help inform where Head Start grantees are performing well and where they need technical assistance, and have already led to local program improvements. NRS is a critical tool to ensure that Head Start programs prepare children to succeed in school. Terminating the NRS -- particularly without proposing any alternative -- would be a significant step backwards for Head Start.

The Administration opposes the unworkable and overly prescriptive allocations and set-asides in the bill, including those for Early Head Start, "quality improvement," and technical assistance. The Administration opposes new provisions that would allow programs to enroll higher-income children before ensuring that all of the neediest children are afforded an opportunity to participate.

The Administration strongly encourages the House to amend H.R. 1429 to ensure that faith-based organizations are not asked to forfeit their religious hiring autonomy as a condition of receiving Head Start grants. The Administration believes that such provisions should be applied to all federally funded social service programs so faith-based organizations may operate on an equal level with every other organization competing to provide services.

The Administration will continue to work with Congress on a comprehensive approach to Head Start reauthorization to ensure that every child enters school ready to learn.

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