

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

**CHAIRMAN KILDEE STATEMENT AT SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON “IMPROVING HEAD START FOR
AMERICA’S CHILDREN”**

I’m pleased to welcome my fellow Subcommittee Members – especially those of you who are new to the Committee – the public, and our witnesses, to this hearing on “Improving Head Start for America’s Children.”

Head Start has served our most vulnerable children and families extremely well for 42 years, and more recently, Early Head Start has done the same for infants and toddlers and their families.

There are no more critical programs for our nation’s children than these, because there are no years more critical to their development than the early ones.

Head Start and Early Head Start provide high-quality, comprehensive services to children and their families that help the children develop cognitively and non-cognitively to enable them to succeed in school and in life.

As Head Start providers have known for years, and as we will hear today, early learning is a product of both cognitive and non-cognitive development.

That is why Head Start and Early Head Start are so successful, because they promote both and meet high standards in doing so.

Providing infants and toddlers and young children with the support and security they need helps their brains develop in the early years and sets the foundation – literally – for later development and learning.

We also will hear today about the importance of Head Start’s focus both on children and their families. Head Start recognizes that healthy, well-adjusted children are far more likely to come from healthy, well-adjusted families and that when families are under great stress, that stress affects their children’s development.

One of the greatest stresses on families in our lifetimes has been the ongoing impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their aftermath on the people of New Orleans and the Gulf region.

Today, we will learn about that tragedy, one program's efforts to mitigate it on behalf of the families they serve, and what still needs to be done to help those families.

And, we will hear suggestions for improving the relationship between the federal Department of Health and Human Services and local Head Start programs to make it a supportive relationship that helps programs reach the high standards to which they aspire, and also suggestions for increasing coordination between Head Start and state-funded pre-Kindergarten programs.

I am confident that today's hearing will provide us with valuable information about how Head Start works and what we can do to make it work even better.

I know that one thing that will not make Head Start work better would be to cut our investment in it by \$100 million as the President has proposed.

I don't believe that the President's budget reflects the values of the American people, and I will work with my colleagues in Congress to produce a budget that does.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that working together with my Ranking Member, Mr. Castle, and our full Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, Mr. Miller and Mr. McKeon, and with all the Members of the Committee, we can pass a reauthorization bill soon that will build on 42 years of Head Start's successes, for the good of our nation's children.

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