

The Honorable George Miller  
Markup Statement (offered on behalf of Vice Chairman Dale E.  
Kildee) on H.R. 1429, Improving Head Start Act of 2007

Wednesday, March 14, 2007

I would like to thank Chairman Miller, Mr. McKeon, Mr. Castle, and all the Members of this Committee for their hard work on this bill.

I would also like to thank staff for the work they did to get this bill ready for today - in particular – Lloyd Horwich with my staff, Stephanie Milburn with Ranking Member McKeon, Sarah Rittling with Mr. Castle, Molly Carter on my staff, and the committee’s senior education policy advisor Ruth Friedman.

Head Start reauthorization has long been a bipartisan effort in Congress and today we continue that tradition.

Head Start has been the premiere early education program in this country for more than 40 years and has served more than 20 million children and families in that time. The program remains a cornerstone in this country’s efforts to combat poverty and provide all its citizens with the opportunity to thrive.

Today, more than 12 million children in America live in poverty, including approximately one out of every five children under the age of six.

Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to face physical and mental health problems, experience less academic success, and see fewer economic opportunities throughout life.

Head Start has been key to helping children who grow up in poverty overcome these obstacles.

It is a highly successful, research-based, comprehensive child development and early education program for both low-income children, from birth to age five, and their families.

Everyday, Head Start and Early Head Start programs across the country are helping prepare our nation's most disadvantaged children to succeed in school and in life by addressing all of the child's needs – from health and nutrition to an educational curriculum.

Head Start is also unique because it has long recognized that parents are children's most important and influential teachers. Head Start has always prioritized parent involvement and focused on serving the needs of the family as well as the child.

Head Start reauthorization is also central to achieving the goals of No Child Left Behind, because it helps to close the "achievement gap" among disadvantaged children before they reach kindergarten.

All the research concludes that Head Start works.

One large study found that children made significant gains during the Head Start year and even greater advances in their kindergarten year. By the end of kindergarten, the Head Start graduates were "essentially at national norms in early reading and writing, and about

one third of a standard deviation below national norms in vocabulary, general knowledge and early math.”

Research also finds that children who attend Head Start enter school better prepared than low-income children who do not attend the program.

The Congressionally-mandated Impact Study found that after less than one school year, Head Start narrowed the achievement gap by 45 percent in pre-reading and by 28 percent in pre-writing.

That same study found Head Start helped improve parenting practices, including increasing the frequency with which parents read to their children.

We also have research to show that Head Start students experience IQ gains and are less likely to need special education services, repeat a grade, or commit crimes in adolescence. They are more likely to graduate from high school.

I am encouraged to see that research concludes Head Start is doing what we expect and need it to do – help prepare children to succeed in school.

The research also points out areas in Head Start where improvement is needed. I believe that we address those issues with the bill before us today.

The Improving Head Start Act includes improvements that build on the latest research on brain and child development so that Head Start programs do an even better job preparing their students to succeed in

school and in life. No one should expect Head Start to be the magic pill that inoculates children from the heavy burden of poverty.

But I believe by building on the program's success, by making sure it integrates the best science and the best early childhood practices, we can provide Head Start children with a better future.

I now yield to Mr. McKeon for his opening statement.