

Statement on Signing the Children's Health Act of 2000 *October 17, 2000*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4365, the "Children's Health Act of 2000." This legislation authorizes expanded research and services for a wide variety of childhood and prenatal health problems, reauthorizes programs of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and addresses the problem of substance abuse and associated violence.

This Act calls on HHS to continue providing services to children whose lives have been affected by diseases such as diabetes, asthma, lead poisoning, cancer, and autism, and to expand research in these and other areas such as birth defects and brain injuries so that we can better understand their causes and develop treatments. I am pleased that H.R. 4365 authorizes a new research effort, a national long-term study of environmental influences on children's health and development, that will provide critical information about environmental, social, and economic factors that affect children's health. We hope that with increased understanding of children's diseases, we will get closer to ultimately finding cures or preventing these conditions from ever occurring. I am gratified to see that this bill's focus on children's health addresses several priority areas identified by the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children.

I am also pleased that H.R. 4365 authorizes new funds to improve the health and safety of children in child care. Available, affordable, safe, high-quality child care is a concern for any working parent. I have committed my Administration to achieving this goal, and today we are making substantial strides forward.

As a Nation, we continue to face the challenges of curbing substance abuse, especially among our youth, preventing youth violence, and addressing the mental health needs of our citizens. For this reason, I am especially proud of the comprehensive manner in which this legislation addresses illegal drug abuse, beginning with the reauthorization of SAMHSA. The Act will improve mental health and substance abuse services for children and adolescents by authorizing grants for youth drug treatment and early

intervention, suicide prevention, and programs to help children deal with violence, and will address the mental health needs of individuals in the criminal justice system. The bill also lays the groundwork for giving States even more flexibility in the use of block grant funds in exchange for greater accountability.

This bill includes a provision making clear that religious organizations may qualify for SAMHSA's substance abuse prevention and treatment grants on the same basis as other nonprofit organizations. The Department of Justice advises, however, that this provision would be unconstitutional to the extent that it were construed to permit governmental funding of organizations that do not or cannot separate their religious activities from their substance abuse treatment and prevention activities that are supported by SAMHSA aid. Accordingly, I construe the Act as forbidding the funding of such organizations and as permitting Federal, State, and local governments involved in disbursing SAMHSA funds to take into account the structure and operations of a religious organization in determining whether such an organization is constitutionally and statutorily eligible to receive funding.

The Act also builds upon our ongoing efforts to address the emerging threats posed by methamphetamine and Ecstasy use, especially among our Nation's youth. It makes medical treatments for heroin addiction more available and accessible by allowing qualified physicians to prescribe certain medications in their offices, and avoids the centralized clinic approach that many addicts find inaccessible and stigmatizing. In addition to expanding drug treatment, including innovations in medication development, the bill supports increased resources for drug programs in the criminal and juvenile justice systems. This legislation also supports our law enforcement entities as they carry out their responsibilities to make certain that those who traffic in these deadly poisons are taken off the streets and are punished in a manner commensurate with the seriousness of their offenses.

The programs contained in this bill to improve and expand research and services for our children's physical and mental health, and to

prevent substance abuse and violence, are important investments in the well-being of our Nation. For these reasons, I am pleased to sign H.R. 4365.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 17, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 4365, approved October 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106–310.

Statement on Signing the Microenterprise for Self-Reliance and International Anti-Corruption Act of 2000 *October 17, 2000*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1143, the “Microenterprise for Self-Reliance and International Anti-Corruption Act of 2000.” The primary purpose of this legislation is to authorize continued and expanded efforts to provide assistance to the world’s poorest entrepreneurs. The Act is the result of a long process of collaboration and negotiation among Members of Congress, my Administration, and the nonprofit microenterprise community represented by the Microenterprise Coalition. I congratulate all who worked on this bipartisan, public-private effort.

I am proud that my Administration has put microenterprise development and democratizing access to capital on the national and international agenda. When I was Governor of Arkansas, the First Lady and I encouraged and supported some of the first microenterprise programs in the United States. Thanks to the work of pioneering microenterprise development organizations around the world, all of us have come to appreciate the potential of microenterprise as means to empower poor people, especially women, to help themselves and their families.

Microenterprise programs help self-employed entrepreneurs obtain loans for small business enterprises to begin the process of growing out of poverty. Without microenterprise programs administered by the Agency for International Development and many nongovernmental organizations, these poor entrepreneurs abroad would not be able to borrow the small amount of money needed to get their repair shops, sewing shops, or similar businesses, off the ground. This is not a gift to these entrepreneurs, it is a loan. And experience has shown that these small loans are repaid and, in the process, these small-scale enterprises generate income and jobs for poor families.

This Act also represents a breakthrough in recognizing the value of business development services to the very poorest entrepreneurs. To many poor entrepreneurs, basic training and technical assistance in running a business can be as important as a loan.

In addition, H.R. 1143 authorizes a range of programs to promote good governance and democratization overseas. The United States has long encouraged and funded programs that foster an independent media, establish audit offices for executive agencies, and promote judicial reform. This legislation contains authority to provide assistance in furtherance of these programs to countries that would otherwise be prohibited from receiving U.S. assistance. While no direct assistance to the governments of such countries can be provided under this authority, the legislation and its history make clear that assistance to such governments through nongovernmental organizations would be permissible.

The Act also contains the “Support for Overseas Cooperative Development Act,” which expresses support for the development and expansion of U.S. economic assistance programs abroad that fully utilize cooperatives and credit unions. My Administration and the Congress value and support the direct involvement of U.S. cooperative organizations in transferring their knowledge to local cooperatives in countries overseas.

Lastly, I note that H.R. 1143 includes the “International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000,” which authorizes the Department of State to establish a grant program, to be called the “Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarships.” These scholarships will enable American undergraduate students of limited financial