

Statement on Signing the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007

December 12, 2007

Today I signed into law the “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007,” a bill to reauthorize Head Start. Over the past 40 years, Head Start has provided comprehensive child development services to more than 20 million low-income children and their families to promote school readiness. Because of the National Reporting System, we know that more Head Start programs are helping children gain early reading and math skills. But we must take steps to improve Head Start to ensure that low-income children arrive at school ready to learn.

I am pleased that this bill addresses several longstanding administration priorities, such as increased competition among Head Start providers, improved coordination of early childhood delivery systems, and stronger educational performance standards. Increasing competition for providers will help ensure that we offer the highest quality programs to our Nation’s most vulnerable young children. Greater collaboration among Head Start agencies, schools, and other programs serving young children will help ensure our investments are better aligned and more effective. Stronger educational performance standards and an emphasis on research-based curricula and

classroom practices will increase children’s preparedness for school. I also support the bill’s provisions to strengthen fiscal accountability and program oversight, so that dollars intended to serve children are spent wisely.

I am, however, deeply disappointed that the bill ends the National Reporting System, our only tool to examine consistently how Head Start children are performing in programs across the Nation. We should be working to provide more and better data to parents, teachers, and policymakers, not less. I am concerned that the bill authorizes spending levels higher than those proposed in my budget. Approval of this legislation is not an endorsement of these funding levels or a commitment to request them. I am also disappointed that the bill fails to include my proposal to protect faith-based organizations’ religious hiring autonomy.

I thank Members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation. I will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our neediest children are prepared for success in school and a lifetime of achievement.

NOTE: H.R. 1429, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 110–134.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007”

December 12, 2007

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 3963, the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007.” Like its predecessor, H.R. 976, this bill does not put poor children first and

it moves our country’s health care system in the wrong direction. Ultimately, our Nation’s goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage—not to move children who already