

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1620

To condition the implementation of assessment procedures in connection with the Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

Mr. BINGAMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To condition the implementation of assessment procedures in connection with the Head Start National Reporting System on Child Outcomes, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Head Start Assess-
5 ment Act of 2003”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) When used appropriately, valid and reliable
9 assessments can be of positive value for improving

1 instruction and supporting development of young
2 children.

3 (2) According to the National Academy of
4 Sciences report, *Eager to Learn: Educating Our*
5 *Preschoolers*, assessment of children below school
6 age is in “flux” and “all assessments, and particu-
7 larly assessments for accountability, must be used
8 carefully and appropriately if they are to resolve,
9 and not create, educational problems.”

10 (3) The *Eager to Learn* report emphasized that
11 the intended purpose and use of the data to be de-
12 rived from assessments should be considered in de-
13 termining which assessment instruments and proce-
14 dures are most appropriate.

15 (4) The National Academy of Sciences reports
16 that few early childhood educators and administra-
17 tors are well-trained in the selection and appropriate
18 use of assessments for young children.

19 (5) According to the National Academy of
20 Sciences report, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*,
21 the emotional and social development of young chil-
22 dren is as critical to school readiness as language
23 and cognitive development.

24 (6) The Head Start Act currently requires pro-
25 grams to assess children in Head Start a minimum

1 of three times a year against certain performance
2 standards, which include all domains of the develop-
3 ment and learning of children.

4 (7) The proposed Head Start National Report-
5 ing System on Child Outcomes assessment is not re-
6 flective of the full range of skills and competencies
7 that the National Academy of Sciences reports state
8 children require to succeed, and it has not been
9 thoroughly debated by those groups associated with
10 Head Start, including early childhood development
11 and assessment experts, early childhood educators
12 and administrators, family members of children par-
13 ticipating in Head Start, or Congress.

14 **SEC. 3. DELAYED IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT PRO-**
15 **CEDURES IN CONNECTION WITH THE HEAD**
16 **START NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM ON**
17 **CHILD OUTCOMES.**

18 (a) SATISFACTION OF CONDITIONS.—The Secretary
19 of Health and Human Services shall not proceed with the
20 full-scale implementation of the Head Start National Re-
21 porting System on Child Outcomes, as described in the
22 project proposal (68 Fed. Reg. 17815; relating to Imple-
23 mentation of the Head Start National Reporting System
24 on Child Outcomes), until the Secretary certifies to Con-
25 gress that the following conditions have been satisfied:

1 (1) OVERSIGHT HEARINGS.—Congressional
2 oversight hearings have been concluded concerning
3 the development and implementation of the Head
4 Start National Reporting System on Child Out-
5 comes.

6 (2) PUBLIC FORUMS.—The Secretary has con-
7 cluded, consistent with the requirements of sub-
8 section (b), public forums in different regions of the
9 United States, and provided an opportunity for writ-
10 ten public comments, concerning early childhood as-
11 sessment proposals.

12 (3) STUDY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESS-
13 MENTS.—The Secretary has submitted, consistent
14 with subsection (c), to Congress a study of early
15 childhood assessments focusing on improving ac-
16 countability, instruction, and the delivery of services.
17 The Secretary shall request the National Academy of
18 Sciences to prepare the study using a panel of na-
19 tionally recognized experts in early childhood assess-
20 ment, child development, and education.

21 (4) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Without reduc-
22 ing the number of students served by Head Start,
23 sufficient funds are available to—

24 (A) develop and implement any new Head
25 Start assessments; and

1 (B) deliver necessary additional technical
2 assistance and professional development re-
3 quired to successfully implement the new as-
4 sessments.

5 (b) PUBLIC FORUM PARTICIPATION.—To satisfy the
6 condition specified in subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall
7 ensure that participation in the required forums in-
8 cludes—

9 (1) early childhood development and assessment
10 experts;

11 (2) early childhood educators and administra-
12 tors; and

13 (3) family members of children participating in
14 Head Start.

15 (c) INFORMATION REQUIRED BY STUDY ON EARLY
16 CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENTS.—To satisfy the condition
17 specified in subsection (a)(3), the Secretary shall ensure
18 that the required study contains, at a minimum, specific
19 information regarding the following:

20 (1) Which skills and competencies are predictive
21 of school readiness and future academic success.

22 (2) The development, selection, and use of in-
23 struments, determined to be reliable and validated
24 for preschoolers, including preschoolers in the Head

1 Start population, to assess the development in young
2 children of—

3 (A) literacy, language, and mathematical
4 skills;

5 (B) emotional and social skills; and

6 (C) health and physical well-being.

7 (3) The development of appropriate benchmarks
8 and the proper use of early childhood assessments to
9 improve Head Start program effectiveness and in-
10 struction.

11 (4) The resources required for successful imple-
12 mentation of additional assessments within Head
13 Start and how such additional assessments might be
14 coordinated with current processes.

15 (5) Whether a new assessment would provide
16 information to improve program accountability or in-
17 struction that is not already available from existing
18 assessments and reporting procedures within Head
19 Start.

20 (6) The professional development and personnel
21 needs for successful implementation of early child-
22 hood assessments.

23 (7) The practicality of employing sampling
24 techniques as part of any early childhood assess-
25 ment.

1 (8) The practicality of employing observational
2 and work-sampling assessment techniques as part of
3 an early childhood assessment.

4 (9) Steps needed to ensure that assessments ac-
5 commodate the racial, cultural, and linguistic diver-
6 sity of young children, including young children with
7 disabilities.

