

uphold our law, begin to defend our borders and begin to, in fact, enforce immigration law.

A TRIBUTE TO THE ASSOCIATED UNDERGROUND CONTRACTORS OF MICHIGAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise a community working together to accomplish an important goal. In an unprecedented effort, the members of the AUC, Michigan's heavy construction association, came together to renovate a unique historic site that we have in the State of Michigan, the Henry Ford. The Henry Ford museum and historical site includes Greenfield Village, the Henry Ford Museum and IMAX theater and the Benson Ford Research Center.

In 1929, Henry Ford started a living museum about American life. He wanted to collect and preserve objects that were used in everyday life. From the cider mill to the newly acquired electric car, over 83 historic structures on 90 acres celebrate the innovation and imagination of inventors whose ideas have changed our everyday life.

Mr. Speaker, last fall, in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford began a much-needed renovation. It faced all the problems of a modern town such as power outages, sewer failures, storm water flooding, decaying roads and treacherous sidewalks, as well as the equally challenging task of preserving a historic landmark.

Members of the AUC, Michigan's heavy construction association, donated their time, effort, equipment, materials, and innovative methods to solve these problems. More than 20 normally competitive contractors united to preserve 25,000 trees, replace nearly 35 miles of underground systems, and rebuild almost 11 miles of roads and sidewalks. They replaced sanitary sewers, water mains, storm sewers, irrigation piping, natural gas piping, and rewired electric and communication lines. Their expertise is estimated to have reduced the cost of renovation by nearly \$10 million and completed it in less than a year. This was done by working together, management and labor, volunteers and professionals; and I just want today, Mr. Speaker, to commend the efforts of this community in their effort to save and revitalize Henry Ford.

Henry Ford himself once said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." We had a success. The members of the AUC and many others came together, stayed together, and worked together to successfully honor the legacy of a great man and preserve part of history for our children. For that, the members of AUC

and all those who helped in this fine effort are to be commended.

HONORING MAUDELLA SHIREK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this resolution to honor the vice mayor of the city of Berkeley, a great leader for human and civil rights, for peace and disarmament, council member Vice Mayor Maudelle Shirek.

Today, is Vice Mayor Maudelle Shirek's 92nd birthday, 92nd; and in honor of her tremendous legacy, I am extremely proud to introduce the Maudelle Shirek Post Office resolution. While fighting for social justice is no rarity in Berkeley, Maudelle's name always stands above the rest because of her uncompromising fidelity to her ideals and compassion for people.

As one of my political heroes, Maudelle continues to fight for equality and social justice for all. She is truly a role model for women, especially for young African American women.

She not only inspired me to get involved in politics but also my predecessor, the honorable Ronald V. Delums. Her commitments to investing in people have won the solid support for many years of voters in her district. She is recognized throughout the world as a distinguished leader.

One of my most memorable Maudelle stories was when she was arrested with about 109 others in an anti-apartheid protest at the University of California at Berkeley. Many of the protestors were many years younger, including myself. She knew very well the awesome power of standing for what is right, regardless of the consequences.

A granddaughter of slaves, Maudelle left rural Arkansas which, of course, was her home; and she came to California in the middle of World War II. Before long, she was campaigning for fair housing and for many, many civil rights issues for African Americans and others who had been left out and disenfranchised. She became a union organizer and an office manager of the Co-Op Credit Union. She has helped many, many families in terms of their financial stability in the 9th Congressional District, especially in the city of Berkeley. She has demonstrated throughout her life the need for coalition politics for the betterment of humankind.

Vice Mayor Shirek's community commitment really knows no limits. She helped found two Berkeley senior centers, one of which she really still actively oversees; and at 92 years of age, she still delivers meals to shut-in seniors or, if it is a Tuesday, she does all of the shopping for lunches at the New Light Senior Center, which she founded 28 years ago. She taught many, including myself, the value of eating

nutritious foods in order to live a healthy life.

Vice Mayor Maudelle Shirek continues to speak for the voiceless and to defend our basic civil rights and civil liberties. Please join me in honoring Ms. Maudelle Shirek, our Vice Mayor of the city of Berkeley, who is a fierce and inspirational woman who tirelessly continues to fight to make this world fair and just, a world of peace for our children's future.

The Maudelle Shirek Post Office will be a testament to the enormous contributions of this great woman.

IN MEMORY OF FORMER NEVADA CONGRESSMAN DAVID GILMER TOWELL

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of, and announce the death of, former Nevada Congressman David Gilmer Towell, who lost his fight with cancer this past week.

Congressman Towell dedicated his life to both national and local politics from a very early age. In 1966, he founded the Douglas County Young Republicans; and within 4 years, he became the chairman of the Douglas County Republican Central Committee; and in 1972, he defeated a 10-year incumbent and was elected as Nevada's only Member of the House of Representatives.

In Congress, he would serve the people of Nevada with great distinction. He believed that government should be held accountable for a balanced budget and responsible to spending, those ideals which all of us in this House continue to echo and support 25 years later.

I extend my sympathies to his family and friends as we join together in mourning the loss of this valuable member of our community. His leadership of Nevada and of our country will serve as his legacy, and he will be remembered for years to come.

HEAD START AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my pleasure this evening to come here to the floor of the House to address on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus two issues that are of paramount concern. Both of them go to the very essence of life and both of them address two populations within these United States who are so often quite vulnerable.

Those issues go to addressing our Head Start program, which is one of

the most effective programs in the world with regard to lifting up our children so that they can be all that God meant for them to be; and the other one goes to our seniors, with regard to their need for prescription drugs.

□ 1715

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that these generations, the generations that count on us the most, are being neglected, overlooked and underprotected by this Nation's policymakers. My Republican colleagues seemed to be running trains in opposite directions on the same track this week; and, as a result, the programs that benefit children and the services needed by seniors are inevitably headed on a collision course that benefits no one.

First, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce is considering the School Readiness Act of 2003. The supposed intention of this bill is to better prepare Head Start graduates to begin kindergarten, as well as to set high standards for preschool readiness, teacher qualifications and comprehensive services. I say the supposed intention, Mr. Speaker, because this bill is, in truth, a thinly veiled attempt to dismantle one of the best tools used by the Federal Government to combat the negative effects of poverty on child learning.

It seems evident to me that my Republican colleagues do not believe that the government's role is to provide social services or provide a safety net for the American people. So my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have begun to attack these social programs that lend a hand up to many in hopes of greatly enriching the few with tax cuts we simply cannot afford.

My Republican colleagues are masking the true intentions of this bill, Mr. Speaker, and their deceit must be exposed. But this is no surprise, because it has been done before, again and again. The tax cut that passed this House not too long ago, with its sunset provisions, is a good example of Republican attempts to mask the true purpose of legislation.

The administration, Mr. Speaker, is claiming that Head Start children do not perform as well as other children once they get to kindergarten. Just the other day, I was at the Union Baptist Church Head Start Center in Baltimore, which is approximately 3 minutes from my home. I went there, Mr. Speaker, to watch little children graduate from Head Start, to hear many of them read on a second and third grade level, yet still we have those on the other side of the aisle who say that Head Start simply does not work. I would say to them that they need to go to the Union Baptist Church in Baltimore, only a 50-minute drive from D.C., and they will see young, beautiful children born into poverty but enriched by caring parents, caring teachers, and administrators at their Head Start center, and they are going to be all that God meant for them to be.

But, Mr. Speaker, the comparison of Head Start students with students who are not from poverty situations is a false comparison. Studies have shown that those students who participate in Head Start versus those that are similarly situated but do not participate in Head Start are far better off having been exposed to the Head Start program. But I should be clear: Head Start is not intended to be a solution. It is intended to be a head start.

We cannot solve all the problems of society that these kids are exposed to in the Head Start program. I have often seen where children will come to school and because they have not had the advantage of having been in Head Start, a lot of times those students from poor areas are already behind. Then what happens is they will go into a school and the kindergarten teachers tell us that they have to spend a phenomenal amount of time making sure that the other children, the children who are behind, are able to catch up to the other children. So, therefore, all the children are held up.

Mr. Speaker, instead of skewing survey results that benefit certain political ideologies, what we should be focusing on is improving what we know works. What we should focus on is strengthening and expanding this vital program for our youth and not seek to undermine and eventually eliminate it as we know it.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to discuss Medicare and the proposed prescription drug plan. Mr. Speaker, one's retirement years are often referred to as the golden years. But, today, the high cost of living and our slowing economy are making these golden years very difficult ones to enjoy. For that reason, I urge the House to pass a Medicare prescription drug plan that will alleviate the burdens retired seniors face when they are on a fixed budget.

The median household income of 65 and over is a mere \$23,118. In my home State of Maryland, 70,000 seniors currently live on incomes that fall below the Federal poverty line of \$12,120, yet most of us know that one of the biggest obstacles to enjoying their golden years is the cost of prescription drugs. Eighty percent of American seniors take a prescription drug every day. Of this, approximately 5 million seniors must pay for prescription drugs that cost more than \$4,500 a year, while almost 3 million must pay more than \$5,800 for their medicines. If we do the math, this comes out to paying anywhere from \$375 to \$483 per month, on top of the challenges I just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, beyond the numbers are the real stories of real people. When I visit senior citizens throughout my district, the one thing they ask is for us to be honest with them and to pass a meaningful and workable prescription drug plan; and they say, "Please do it now, Congressman. We can't wait 5 years, because in 5 years we will be dead without our prescriptions." One lady told me she must go from phar-

macy to pharmacy just to find free samples of the medicine she needs to survive. Another lady told me that she must cut her pills in half in order to save on the cost. And it is not unusual for me to hear stories about how seniors have gone without groceries, electricity, or other necessities just so they can pay for their prescription drugs. These are people that I hope my colleagues will think of as they vote on a Medicare prescription drug plan in the next few weeks.

I believe these stories I just shared are not unique to Baltimore. Every Member of this House probably has individuals such as the ones I described in his or her district. Yesterday, the Committee on Ways and Means passed H.R. 2473, the Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. That sounds awfully good in name, but it actually undermines the very nature of the health care program that serves more than 40 million elderly and disabled Americans. Although there is a prescription drug coverage provision in this bill, seniors still have to struggle to pay for their medicines.

Although the plan would cover 80 percent of drugs that cost between \$251 and \$2,000, this leaves out millions of people I mentioned earlier whose average cost of drugs is \$4,500. This is because the bill passed by the Committee on Ways and Means would provide zero coverage for drugs that cost between \$2,000 and \$4,900. This is a huge gap where no assistance or coverage is available. I therefore urge my colleagues to, instead, adopt a Medicare prescription drug program that is affordable, available to all seniors and disabled Medicare beneficiaries, offers meaningful benefits, and is available within the traditional Medicare program.

We have introduced such a plan, H.R. 1199, the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Discount Act of 2003. I applaud my good friend and distinguished colleague from New York Congressman (Mr. RANGEL) for sponsoring this bill. I am also a cosponsor, along with most of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Another concern I have about the Republican sponsored H.R. 2473 is that it relies heavily on privatization in order to manage cost. The problem with the GOP plan, Mr. Speaker, is that it would force seniors to use private insurance companies for drug coverage rather than relying on Medicare, which by the way seniors have paid for all their lives. They have worked day after day, year after year, given their blood, sweat and tears to support a program which now seems, if the Republicans' efforts are successful, to abandon them.

Although supporters of the GOP plan claim that competition would help control cost, the truth is that privatization would open a Pandora's box, because private insurance companies and managed care plans would design the new prescription drug plans. The private companies would also decide what

to charge and then decide which drugs seniors would get. And private insurance plans would only have to promise to stay in the program for 1 year. This would result in seniors being compelled to change plans, change doctors, and even change the drugs they take every 12 months.

Skeptics who are listening to me right now, Mr. Speaker, may be thinking that this is only speculation. But in April, I spoke with a group of seniors at the Vantage House Continuing Care Retirement Community in Columbia, Maryland, who testified that privatization would be detrimental to the health care needs of our seniors. For example, under a similar program called Medicare-Plus Choice, that was mandated by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, many seniors have experienced obstacles in receiving quality health care. Medicare-Plus Choice is a Medicare program administered by an HMO.

The program was introduced to provide Medicare beneficiaries with access to greater benefits than the traditional Medicare program and, at the same time, to reduce Medicare spending. However, the Alliance of Retired Americans has reported that this goal has failed. For example, over 2.2 million beneficiaries have been involuntarily kicked out of the program since 1999, 327,000 of whom had no other Medicare-Plus Choice program available to them. Nearly 200,000 more beneficiaries are expected to be dropped by their Medicare-Plus Choice plan in 2003.

One of the main reasons for the policy cancellation is because providers, such as doctors and hospitals, are increasingly unwilling to accept HMO payments they consider inadequate to cover the cost of care. This is exactly what will happen if the Republican plan is adopted. If we really and truly want to make sure that seniors enjoy their golden years, then this particular bill take us in the wrong direction.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to not overlook our concerns. This is not about politics, it is about people, my constituents, who have worked hard all their lives, who have built this country and made it one of the best countries in the world, and now they simply ask that they be treated fairly.

I also want to take a moment to thank our leader on the Democratic side, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI). She has been at the forefront of both of these issues, addressing the issue of prescription drugs and addressing the issue of Head Start. Her sensitivity, her constant efforts to bring these issues before the American people is greatly appreciated by our caucus and I am sure greatly appreciated by all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honor and great privilege to yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON).

□ 1730

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address my concerns about

H.R. 2210, the School Readiness Act. The major changes and new requirements under title II and title I will damage the integrity and efficacy of the program. This overhaul reverses the precedence in achievement that was created by the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB seeks to close the achievement gap through stronger standards and stronger Federal oversight. H.R. 2210 attempts to reach the same solution by eliminating standards and oversight.

Title I serves to weaken the performance standards of the current Head Start program. States will be able to lower teacher standards. H.R. 2210 decreases the percentage of funds reserved for training and technical assistance from no less than 2 percent to 1 to 2 percent. The bill requires minimal parental involvement. Head Start will become disassociated with the Department of Health and Human Services.

A process of contracting out monitoring programs strikes the requirement that HHS oversee Head Start. The block grant encourages States to refer families to outside services for assistance that was once under the jurisdiction of HHS. This nullifies the 13 areas of Head Start performance standards that maintain the program's high level of quality. Under this legislation, the Secretary approves applications from States that meet the loose eligibility criteria by default. In essence there is no oversight or evaluation of the quality of the State plan.

Mr. Speaker, since its inception under the guise of HHS, Head Start was designed to help the whole child. Current service offered through HHS cannot be carried out as effectively with minimum input by the Department.

Above all, States will be forced to reduce the overall number of Head Start children served. States have already been forced to cut early childhood education programs outside of Head Start due to the budget crunch. The block grant allows States to use Head Start funds to supplement other Federal programs. Governors may be able to use this money to cover budget deficits in their States. In California, that receives over \$800 million for Head Start, at the same time there is a \$38 billion budget deficit. With the block grant proposal, my State has the option to use \$800 million to close this budgetary gap.

Changing the funding formula to block grants, under title II, creates a daunting scenario for the Head Start program. The four eligibility requirements under title II do not address quality or expertise. The legislation requires the bare minimum of States: an existing prekindergarten system, standards for school readiness, allocating no less than 50 percent of funds to grantees and their interagency coordination. All 50 States meet these requirements, but too few provide the quality level of services.

At present only three States provide all the services needed to get at-risk

children ready to learn. These States provide the same set of eight comprehensive services required of Head Start through state-run prekindergarten programs.

Mr. Speaker, 30 States have such programs; yet only three are able to meet the standards that they created in order to prepare our children for success in school.

Now we want to give all 50 States this responsibility, knowing full well that these States have not proven that they are able to do so. This will be a great disservice to our Nation's youth. We must make better investments in our children and our future instead of stuffing the pockets of millionaires. An investment in our children equals an investment in our Nation's strength, in our Nation's security, and in the future.

The economic plans and the focus of the administration must be balanced between future consequences and immediate gain. We must also continue to keep the facts at the front of the debate so that the administration and Congress can make policy decisions based on the facts rather than on misguided interpretations and subjective judgments.

Since 1965, Head Start has been one of the most successful anti-poverty programs. According to a recent report of the President's Management Council, Head Start received the highest consumer satisfaction rating of any government agency or private business.

The program has helped millions of children prepare for school, become productive students and improve the quality of their lives. The current program narrows the readiness gap between Head Start children and their more affluent peers. Almost 70 percent of children enrolled in Head Start programs are from minority groups. One-third of these students are African Americans. Over 34,000 migrant and seasonal workers' children are served annually.

Improving Head Start can be done without this major overhaul. As in the past, improvement can be done under the existing structure.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998 Head Start supporters sought to ensure that at least 50 percent of all Head Start teachers acquire an associate of arts degree or better by the year 2003. The program has met this goal. The HeadsUp! Reading Network was established to train Head Start and other early childhood teachers across the Nation. These are improvements that we hope to establish through the No Child Left Behind Act. We have not yet met these goals, but Head Start has met its goals internally.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to maintain Head Start as it is. It is the duty of Congress to protect the current and the future security of our Nation. We must continue to help the children of migrant workers, at-risk youth, and their parents. By supporting Head Start in its current form, we will be doing just that.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) talked about block granting and how so many States have deficits, and I understand that California has a large deficit; is that correct?

Ms. WATSON. We have a \$38.5 billion deficit.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I think just about every State has a deficit, and I think one of the things that we have been most concerned about is if this money then goes to the States, this Head Start money goes to the States, we are afraid what might happen to that money on its way to our children.

Ms. WATSON. Certainly one would be tempted to fill in the gap. Because of our shortfall in funds and because of the oncoming tax cut, we will have fewer revenues and we will find programs like health competing against educational programs, and I do not know how they can be separated, and other social programs that are the safety net. You have to be compelled in some way when you have some money coming in to close the gap here and close the gap there. They are not going to be closed because they are too deep, but to address the needs with these funds intended for the Head Start program.

Mr. CUMMINGS. One of the things that came out during the Congressional Black Caucus hearing yesterday was a parent from Baltimore, a woman name Portia Deshields, and she said the Head Start program had opened her eyes to so much. First of all, she was a Head Start child, and she placed her child in Head Start. The child just developed by leaps and bounds, had some problems, but Head Start was able to refer them to an appropriate therapist, was able to bring about this type of psychological counseling that the child needed, and then the child was able to graduate from Head Start.

But the thing that was so interesting about what she said was by seeing what Head Start had done for her child and by being involved in Head Start, and as I understand it Head Start, the way the legislation is now, that is the present law, parents must be involved. It is a very, very important thing. She sat on the council for her Head Start organization; and the next thing she said she was so moved by what was going on with her child in Head Start and was so moved by the way she could affect her own Head Start program, she decided to go back to school, and in a few years she will be graduating from college. So her child was lifted up. And she and her family were lifted up.

Ms. WATSON. Head Start is needed now more so than ever. With the new TANF requirements, you as a welfare recipient have to go back to work when the child is 6 months old. That means you are not in the home from zero to 5 to help nurture that child and teach them because you are working, and you are working a full day. So we need Head Start now so children can be ready to learn when they go to kinder-

garten, simple things like tying one's shoe, buttoning one's jacket, being able to share and work with others, those things that were done in the home that will no longer be able to be done in the home because one parent has to go to work, and these are single-parent families so they do not have the time to train their child.

Head Start was created during the War on Poverty during the 1960s. It was the best thing we did to close the safety net. Why would we take a program which has had such successful outcomes, and these can be measured, and start whittling it away? I do not understand the thinking. It will cost us less in the long run to have a Head Start program and not a block grant in every State.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Research has shown that for every dollar we spend for Head Start, we save 4 to \$7 later on. Of course we are talking about we help children avoid teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, dropping out of school, which later on cost society quite a bit; but just as significant or more, the child has then missed out on his or her dream to be all that God meant for them to be. That is such a sad thing when they are denied the opportunity of getting to where they could be.

Ms. WATSON. The research clearly shows if you invest in the early years, there will be more of a guarantee of success in the later years.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's clarification on those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), someone who has been at the forefront of people issues. When children come on the Earth, we already know that they have gifts; and the question is what will we do as adults to help them develop those gifts. She has certainly been at the forefront of the Head Start program to make sure we maintain Head Start and make it better, as well as a Member who has worked very hard on this issue of prescription drugs.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, for the gentleman's leadership and for once again holding this Special Order to attempt to wake up America.

□ 1745

Tonight, of course, under the gentleman's leadership, we are once again talking about children and our senior citizens. Once again we are talking about the Bush administration's dismantling, total dismantling, of social programs. The Bush administration has really waged war on children and our senior citizens. They continue to dismantle, privatize, and create unfunded mandates that truly compound our State budget crisis and leave our children and our senior citizens behind. I have yet to see the compassionate conservatism which was promised over

2 years ago. Actually on my report card, the Bush administration gets first an F for attempting to block grant the section 8 program, which helps kids live in mixed income areas and have the chance to go to mixed and integrated schools, and for eliminating the drug elimination program which provides violence prevention efforts in public housing to increase their safety at home.

The Bush administration gets another F for attempting to block grant Medicare and Medicaid to the States and removing the responsibility of the Federal Government to provide health insurance to millions of children and to families by trying to give this to the States which are really suffering from fiscal shortfalls and extreme budget crises.

They also get an F for failing to include the 12 million children, 12 million, mind you, in their tax cut proposal. They also, based on my report card, get an F for attempting to privatize not only Social Security but the current Republican prescription drug benefit which will leave millions of seniors without coverage. They want to give really the insurance companies and the pharmaceutical companies another way to make more profits. In fact, according to Consumers Union, more seniors would pay more for medicines than they now do under their proposal. That is why they get an F for their prescription drug benefit plan.

They also get an F on the economy, because the Bush administration and this Congress has not provided a secure economy where families can provide for their children because they have jobs and a sense of stability and economic security, not because they have an alleged tax cut. They also get another F for their current Head Start attempts and for continuing to dismantle Head Start really, and that is what they are doing by block granting it and by reducing the effectiveness of Congress, State governments, and our communities.

Tonight, many of us are talking specifically about Head Start and why we cannot stand by and allow our Republican colleagues and the administration to move forward with their plan to test kids, mind you, at age 4, I believe, literacy testing. How cynical. Age 4. Their plan would require care givers as well as teachers to have college degrees instead of concern and sincere interest in their students and would reduce, instead of expand, the success of the current Head Start program. That is why they get an F on my report card for block granting Head Start.

Over the last 4 decades, Head Start nationwide has reached an unbelievable number of students. Since 1965, over 20 million children across the country have participated in Head Start. Last year alone, Head Start and Early Head Start programs worked with more than 900,000 children; that is 900,000 in over 2,500 local programs. In my own hometown of Oakland, California, 1,600 children are part of our area Head Start

program. But we are still not reaching enough kids. On any particular day, 300 to 400 young people are on a waiting list for the Oakland Head Start centers. In fact, all 30 centers have children on a waiting list, meaning that all areas are being affected; 300 to 400 children are far too many to have to begin school already behind. In fact, one child on a waiting list is one too many who do not have access to early participation. Just a couple of months ago, over 300 to 400 families, children, men and women, came to a rally and participated. In no uncertain terms they said very clearly to me, do not tamper with Head Start. If it ain't broke, do not fix it. Leave it alone. Let us put more money in Head Start. Do not subject us to the whims of the State budget crisis.

We cannot stand by and allow this administration and this Republican Congress to dismantle good programs like Head Start. We cannot allow them to succeed in the ongoing elimination, and that is what is going on. It is the systematic elimination of proven programs that benefit and lift up all people in our country. We cannot allow the President and the Republican Congress to dilute what has been one of our most successful programs over the last 4 decades. We must stop this assault on Head Start, we must stop this assault on our children, we must stop this assault on our senior citizens, we must stop this assault in terms of the bogus prescription drug benefit program that the Republicans are pushing, we must stop the assault on section 8, we must stop the assault on Social Security and in terms of our overall domestic economic agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues, all of us, to join with our Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus to once again this evening try in another instance to wake up America in terms of what type of dismal, very backwards policies that this Republican Congress and this administration are shoving down the American people's throats.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus work very closely on a number of issues. It so happens that we work on the two that we are addressing tonight. There is no greater leader that I have come to know than the head of the Hispanic Caucus, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ). Our caucuses have worked hard on many issues. We may not have been able to stop everything, but we certainly were able to throw up a few roadblocks. The fact is that he comes tonight, and I am so glad that our caucuses could join together tonight to address this House.

I yield to my friend, the gentleman from Texas, the Chair of the Hispanic Caucus.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I want to thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding. His leadership has also been noticed throughout the country. I want

to personally thank him. I want to also specifically thank him for reaching out to the Hispanic community across this country and reaching out to the Hispanic Caucus. To me it has been a pleasure working with him. I know we have a great 2 more years to go, and I look forward to continuing to work with him.

I want to also congratulate him on the efforts that he just conducted and we had the pleasure of this week of attending a hearing on Head Start. I want to thank him for inviting me there. We had some beautiful panels that went before the Congressional Black Caucus to talk about the needs of Head Start and to talk about the research regarding Head Start and how to best reach our young people. I want to personally thank the gentleman for the leadership. I want to thank him for that energy that he shows in reaching out. I know that we probably have had for the first time in a long time both Hispanic and African Americans, more press conferences together than anyone else, and we are going to continue to do that. I know that there are a lot of issues that confront the African American community, as well as the Hispanic community, and everyone, the entire community in the country, that we are going to continue to work on. I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership.

Tonight we are here, and I am glad that I have an opportunity to be here to talk about the importance of Head Start. The adequate care in the development of our children is perhaps the greatest hope of America. For those who lack the resources, for those who face the social barriers, the educational barriers, the linguistic barriers, the cultural barriers in the pursuit of this necessary goal, we offer them a program that has worked and that is Head Start, a program that has been there for approximately 35 years, since 1965, a program that has shown that it can reach out to our youngsters and meet the needs.

As chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and also as a parent, and I speak as a father, recognizing the importance of Head Start, recognizing the importance of starting early with some of these youngsters. I just compare myself to my daughter also, where my daughter has had some opportunities to get access to a lot of books. When I was growing up, I did not have those opportunities, and I know that Head Start provides that initial effort that allows those youngsters to be able to compete.

Head Start is a highly successful program. Since its founding in 1965, the Head Start program has provided comprehensive child development and family support services to more than 18 million low-income preschool children and their families. I stress "their families." Given the broad objectives of the programs, it is difficult to compare its success against other programs with more narrow objectives. For over 3 dec-

ades, Head Start has been there for our kids. Head Start is the first and foremost federally funded comprehensive child and family development program designed to meet the needs of low-income families with preschool children. This is why it must stay in the Department of Health and Human Services. It reaches out and works with young people.

Head Start currently is only serving 40 percent of the children that are eligible due to the lack of funding, and only 3 percent of the eligible infants and toddlers. So there is still a lot that we can do. Children born into families of poverty start at a marked disadvantage to their peers in the middle-income and wealthy families. Studies suggest that they do not have that richness of books in their home, proper nutrition or access to continued health care. And so Head Start was created to address this facet of issues, improving the richness of early learning experiences for not only young children but also for their parents as well.

In fact, Head Start focuses on families in fighting poverty in a comprehensive manner that has led the program to its success at getting children ready for school, improving their literacy and improving their skills and giving their parents the skills needed to become the child's first teacher, their best teacher, their parents. Administering the program through the Department of Health and Human Services ensures greater collaboration and the integrity of all the components essential to a child's and family's development. Providing comprehensive education, health and family community resources contribute to children's readiness, especially for low-income children and families. Transferring the program to the Department of Education would undermine the comprehensive program with no guarantees that these essential programmatic components would be preserved. So it is important that this program continues to remain in the Department of Health and Human Services. I know the administration has made every effort to try to change that.

In addition, the President in his 2004 budget proposal introduced initiatives that wage a war on the poorest children of our country, Head Start. The administration purports that moving Head Start to the Department of Education would be the best thing to do. In reality, this program has been working well under the Department of Health and Human Services. We cannot see how this can be improved when it has already been doing a good job. I can only conclude that the President fails to recognize the true value of Head Start. We must ensure that Head Start continues to provide our children with comprehensive services. If the administration continues to want to move Head Start to the Department of Education, if they want to continue to push to put it into a block grant, one can only conclude that this administration and that this President does

not support Head Start and is not willing to allow it and fund it at the level where it should be and allow it to continue to make progress.

Besides trying to dismantle the Head Start program, the President also announced in his 2004 budget an increase of only \$148 million for Head Start. This small increase would not cover the inflation cost that is needed in order to make things happen and in order to continue to meet the needs of more than 60 percent of youngsters that qualify under this program that are not receiving services. And so this increase is not sufficient.

Further, the President's budget proposal of 2004 includes a legislative proposal to introduce an option available to the States to participate in an alternative financing system. Under his proposal, States would receive their Head Start funds under a flexible grant. States are grappling with their own budgets at the present time. In fact, we started this program through the Federal Government because States were unwilling to be responsive.

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States such as Texas, for example, fund only kindergarten at half day. The local community has to fund the rest of it. So we can imagine what they would do with the resources. They would not go to Head Start. They would go somewhere else.

At the same time, the State funding for Early Childhood is at a dismal situation. After this last session, it even got worse, so that we are really concerned that the President's effort at trying to dismantle and attack Head Start is a way of trying to get the resources away from these kids that drastically need them to provide to the States. We are concerned that those resources will be used for other purposes.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk about an important aspect of Head Start that we very seldom talk about, and that is, I would like to take a moment on the seasonal and migrant Head Start programs. Many young migrants and seasonal children in the United States are taken into the fields because the parents have no other place to leave them while they are at work.

Now we are seeing these young people in the Carolinas and other States where we did not see them before, where some of these programs are still not in effect, and I have seen recent pictures taken where young people are right there, young kids of 2 and 3 and 4 years old, next to their parents while they work in the fields. Sometimes young children take care of their younger siblings in camps and fields while their parents work hard in the fields. Migrant and seasonal farm workers in various sectors of our Nation in the agricultural industry, from harvesting, to sorting, to processing, to everything in between; it is hard work, and it takes special skills.

But these families earn about \$10,000 a year. These are the ones that pick

the products and pick the food that we eat. These are the ones that we take for granted when we sit down to eat each night and not recognize that there are people out there doing this kind of work.

Migrant and seasonal Head Start programs serve nearly 32,000 migrant children and nearly 2,500 seasonal children annually. Seasonal and migrant Head Start programs operate in 39 States in every region of the country. These programs offer positive nutritional child care for children ages birth to school entry age. Thirty-five percent of the migrant and seasonal Head Start enrollment is comprised of infants and toddlers. Getting migrant and seasonal children out of unsafe environments is a starting point for migrant and seasonal Head Start programs.

But they do more than that. Migrant and seasonal Head Start programs answer basic needs of migrant and seasonal children, and it is important that these programs remain within the Department of Health and Human Services. Migrant and seasonal Head Start is very different from the other programs because it is the nature of farm labor. Children need full-day services often from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. These programs have been there. We need additional resources for this area.

One of the things that I would question is that if they are transferred over to States, the fact that they exist in 39 States, the fact that they also have to have the flexibility to be able to work with these young people that come in on a seasonal basis that might be there temporarily, our schools are not geared to be able to address that need. The programs that are out there have been meeting that need for over 35 years, and they need more resources, but they have been there for those kids.

They know how to reach out to those kids, and this is one of the main reasons why this program has to remain with the Department of Health and Human Services, and it has to remain with those local communities instead of being put into a State grant.

So tonight I want to take this opportunity to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and thank the Congressional Black Caucus, in their efforts and just to continue to reaffirm that this President and this administration, when he ran for President, he promised to work in the area of education. He promised to deliver a program that would respond to the needs, and he indicated that education was one of his first priorities. But in return, his Leave No Child Behind has \$9 billion of his own bill that he has not funded, and he has left us behind. When it comes to Head Start, the promise that he has is to put it into a block grant and basically destroy the program that hits us at the most vulnerable of this country.

So his promises have been empty words that have not been met. So I want to once again thank the gentleman for allowing me to be here to-

night, and I want to also express my sincerest appreciation for the hard work that he does and the entire Congressional Black Caucus, and I look forward to working with him.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to it too, and we really do thank the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk just for a moment about this whole issue of Head Start, and I would like to engage the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) in a colloquy just very briefly.

One of the things we have in my district is a high school called Veneble High School, and this is for special education children, and one of the things that I have noticed is when I go to their graduations, so many of these children have speech defects. So many of them have problems walking. And the interesting thing that I noticed is that when I talked to the principal at one of the graduations, I said how did this happen? And she said if they had had the proper services when they were little, it would have made a world of difference. In other words, if they had had a speech therapist, maybe if a child were given braces to wear on his leg, by the time he got to be 4 or 5, he would have been able to walk properly. So these children then grow up with problems that could have been corrected earlier, and I think one of the advantages of the Head Start program is that it is comprehensive and they look at all aspects of the child's life and try to address them at that early age.

Has that been the gentlewoman's experience?

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Maryland hit it. That is exactly why moving Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services into the Department of Education is not the right move because currently, our young people who are in Head Start, our children, receive comprehensive services. Their families receive the support. They receive not only a quality early childhood education, but they also receive those basic kinds of support services that they need to move on to lead a quality healthy life. Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the resources for healthcare. We know how much healthcare is costing now. Their parents do not have insurance coverage. They do not have access to dental clinics.

So Head Start provides for immunizations and all of those kinds of healthcare needs in a total package for young people who, by no fault of their own, just do not have any money to receive those types of basic services, and that is why moving it to the Department of Education is wrong and we have got to defeat this proposal.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield to the distinguished gentleman from the great State of Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) who has also been at the forefront of the fight for Head Start and for prescription drugs for our seniors.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) for the leadership that they have shown and displayed.

I just left the markup in the Committee on Education and the Workforce where we have been babbling, I guess one could say, all day long. We have been debating Head Start. And there are certain principles that we have tried to maintain, and one is that the program must be kept comprehensive. It must remain comprehensive and not be streamlined and categorized so that young people will get the full benefit of the most effective program that we have had coming out of the civil rights movement, coming out of the war on poverty. No other program has been as successful as this one.

We also have to make sure that the block granting does not creep in, and we have obviously crept up, and they are down to talking about eight States now that would be demonstration projects, but we have got to watch that because those eight States will still represent one-third of all the children in Head Start.

So if we are talking about eight States with large populations, with large populations of Head Start children, then that becomes a significant number. We are still opposed to the block granting all the way.

We know that we need additional funding, especially as we now have a mandate that 50 percent of the teachers ought to have a college degree by 2008. But how does one get a college degree if one is a Head Start teacher making \$12,000, \$15,000, \$10,000, \$11,000, \$14,000 a year without some help. So we are proposing stipends and scholarships, things that are going to help those individuals.

And I was pleased to note that I did get an amendment accepted a few minutes ago that will call for the creation of a fatherhood initiative, and I noticed that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) mentioned that, as a father, we find that many fathers are absent from the lives of their children and that one of the things that we can do in Head Start is stimulate the growth and development of that.

So I just, again, want to commend all of my colleagues here, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) as he leads the Congressional Black Caucus, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), and it was good to see the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ), chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and I know that the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is here, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) who has been doing an outstanding job in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, we have been there together all day. So I thank the chairman so much.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. The Congressional Black Caucus is very concerned about this issue along with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and sometimes I think what happens is so often people will hear the words Congressional Black Caucus or hear the towards Congressional Hispanic Caucus and think that we are only addressing issues that affect African American and Hispanic people. That is simply not true. The issues that we address go to the very center of people's lives, and I can think of nothing greater that allows a person to be all that they can be than health issues, making sure they have prescriptions that they need and making sure that our children have the education that they need so that they can get to their destiny.

I have often said that our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see, and the question is what kind of message do we send if we deny a child who was born into poverty? That child did not ask to be born into poverty, but he is born into poverty or she, and so that child has a struggle from the very, very beginning. And I think that if we can help a child at 3 years old and give that child a proper foundation so that they could then go forward in life and have what I call consistent appointments with success, then that child grows up, and that child possibly could be the person who finds a cure to pancreatic cancer or could become the President of the United States.

But when they are denied that opportunity at an early age, then so often they go off the road as a straight and narrow path, and the next thing we know, we see them as I see them in my district, so many of them dropping out of school, so many of young ladies having babies as teenagers, and we see the problems that they are confronted with. And Head Start is a program, Mr. Speaker, that has effectively addressed those problems, and again with regard to the prescription drugs, we have to stand up for our seniors.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

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PRESERVING HEAD START

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, to a number of people around the coun-

try it is approximately 15 minutes after 6 in the East, about a quarter after 5 in my neck of the woods in central Alabama; and a lot of people are coming home right now from working on the assembly lines, a lot of people are coming from working in the nursing homes and the places where hard work is done in this country, and a lot of them picked up their children from Head Start.

A lot of them are coming home now, and they are watching this debate, and they are asking a very basic question: Why is this House even assessing the question of Head Start? Why is this House even talking about dismantling Head Start, when in their own lives they see this program has been so enormously successful?

There is an old maxim that if something is not broke, you do not fix it; and the perspective of a large number of people I represent in Birmingham, Alabama, and Selma and Tuscaloosa and in all of the rural counties in my State is that this has been a part of the War on Poverty that has endured. This program, which was launched in the 1960s, has endured, it has survived, and it has notably commanded bipartisan support.

As I talk to friends of mine on the other side of the aisle, particularly friends of mine who have served in State legislatures, a good many of them away from this floor will express that this is a program that has been successful.

So many people wonder why, as we talk about reform, as we talk about changing the educational system in this country, why we are targeting this particular program; and I will make three basic points to follow up on what my very able colleagues from Maryland and California said earlier.

The first one is that this program has been an enormously effective holistic program. It has been a program that has helped not simply make children more literate, but has frankly helped to make children better young men and women, better equipped to participate in school, better equipped to live in their communities.

It is not simply a reading program, it is not simply a literacy program, and to try to limit it or to cabinet it to just those areas deprives the program of some of its potential.

Another very basic point, as we talk about block granting this program even for just eight states, we know the reality of block grants has been that as the programs devolved to the States, the States are often unconstrained in how they spend the money. They are often unconstrained in their vision of how the money should be spent.

I know in my State of Alabama we are facing enormous budget consequences now, and in the States most of us represent our States are fiscally struggling. They are not asking for more programs to be put on their plate from an administrative or financing standpoint. If anything, they want