

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, once again, the needs of children and families do not make a priority in this House. They have left our children out in the cold on the number one issue of our community and that is education. Their proposal to block grant Head Start which provides money without guidelines for States and local implementation diverts attention from the critical needs of this program.

What happened to the issue of local control when it comes to Head Start? What happened to the fact that Head Start has been working well as it is now? Why now send that money to the States?

The only reason we decided to establish Head Start was because the States were unwilling, Mr. Speaker, unwilling to come up and respond to the needs of these children, unwilling to prepare them.

The State of Texas, for example, is still a State that only funds kindergarten half a day. The local community taxpayers have to come up with the rest of the money in order to pay for half day kindergarten, not to mention that they do not provide anything for early childhood. So Head Start is a critical program that has been there, and there actually has been a Head Start for a lot of the Hispanic community. Where 50 percent of our youngsters are still dropping out, Head Start has been there for them to make sure and the statistics show that kids that go to Head Start are less likely to drop out or more likely to finish when they should and go beyond.

Head Start has been a proven program, so why try to mess with it? Why try to destroy Head Start the way we know it now?

One of the top educational priorities of the members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is to ensure that Hispanic children enter school ready to learn. Hispanic children represent the fastest-growing school age population in the Nation. Unfortunately, they are the least likely to have the participation in preschool programs, opening an achievement gap before the first day of school begins.

Soon Congress will again decide funding levels for Head Start, the premier level, early childhood education program that presents us with an opportunity to close that gap for Hispanic and African American children and low-income children.

For over 35 years, the Head Start program has proven itself. It has enjoyed great success in meeting the comprehensive development needs of low-income children. Head Start programs achieve school readiness for these children through the holistic approach and intense parent involvement, and that includes working with the parents. It includes reaching out, making sure that they understand how important education is, which is critical for those youngsters staying in school.

The range and intensity of service is assured because of the national pro-

gram standards that it has. If we rely on the States for full implementation, it would fatally undermine these national standards, jeopardizing access to comprehensive services as well as making Head Start ineffective in serving low-income children and their families. Yet that is just what the Bush administration has proposed and the Republican Congress intends to do and that is to begin to destroy Head Start the way we know it now, put it into the form of a block grant.

Instead of looking for ways to remove themselves of their responsibility for Head Start, the administration and the Congress should put Head Start on the path for full funding. Currently, Head Start serves about 60 percent of their eligible children. They need additional resources to make sure we cover the other kids that are not covered by the existing program.

Migrant and seasonal Head Start programs only reach 19 percent of the eligible children. The State educational agencies are not equipped to reach out to these youngsters that are out in the field a lot of times. As a Nation, we must do better. For migrant and seasonal farm work families, access to Head Start is a public health and safety issue.

In 1992, the General Accounting Office found that at least one-third of all migrant children as young as 10 work in the fields. This is in 1992, where there are still kids working in fields with their families and either contribute to their family income or because no child care was available. Children in the field are at risk from injuries from farm equipment, overexposure to the elements, as well as pesticide poisoning and, of course, long-term health risks associated with exposure to chemicals. In many cases, if slots are not available to migrant seasonal Head Start programs, no programs exist in the area, there is no alternatives but to take the children to the fields and perhaps leave them unattended at the labor camps.

The administration's proposal to block grant Head Start would do nothing to strengthen the growing numbers of limited English proficiency children in communities across this Nation; and we now see them in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas and a lot of the States where we had not seen them before. As we have seen, with the implementation of the President's No Child Left Behind Act, States look to the Federal Government for assistance and guidance in providing services to these populations.

The recent phenomena of emerging Hispanic communities poses a challenge to Head Start providers and participants. As children move into the areas of the U.S. where there have been Head Start programs operating but without experience in servicing, it is important that we continue to provide these resources.

In addition, let me just close by saying it is important that we keep Head

Start. It is important that we remain on track. It is important that this program also remain within the Department of Health and not be moved to the Department of Education.

I also want to congratulate the Congressional Black Caucus on their efforts under the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), and I thank him for being here tonight.

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

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DOGGETT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. WAXMAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FUTURE OF HEAD START

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.

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 the subject of this special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus have come together tonight to address issues that confront our children, and when I say our children, I mean all children who unfortunately may not have the funds to get off to a good start before they start school officially in the kindergarten.

I will have a lot to say about this subject as we go through this hour, Mr. Speaker, but I want to yield first of all to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), who has been at the forefront of addressing issues with regard to Head Start and faith-based issues and constitutional issues that confront us and has made it his business and has vigilantly stood guard with regard to making sure that programs that are put forth are ones that do not discriminate against people with our own tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from the great State of Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding.

The gentleman from Maryland is an outspoken advocate for education and knows the value of the Head Start program, so I rise in support of the Head Start program but in opposition to the Republican Head Start bill.

In 2002, the Head Start program served nearly 1 million children, over 62,000 infants and toddlers in early Head Start. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Speaker, only 60 percent of the qualified 3- and 4-year-olds are currently enrolled in Head Start, and early Head Start is only funded to serve 3 percent of the eligible infants.

We need to make a commitment to fully fund the Head Start program, and this is because money spent on Head Start is money well spent. For every dollar we spend on Head Start, \$4 to \$7 are saved in future expenses because children who participate in Head Start need fewer services in elementary and high school, and they are less likely to go to prison or end up on welfare.

During the Clinton administration, Head Start funding grew from \$2.8 billion in 1993 to \$6.2 billion in 2001. That is an average of approximately \$425 million per year. Over the past 2 years, the President's administration has proposed only a total increase of \$300 million, about \$150 million per year. That is about one-third of the average annual increase over the prior 8 years.

There are a lot of problems with the Republican Head Start bill, but as the gentleman from Maryland indicated, one of the most glaring is the fact that it permits programs run by faith-based organizations to discriminate in their hiring practices with the Federal money; that is, it permits employment discrimination with Federal money, not the church money, but with Federal money.

Sixty-two years ago, on June 25, 1941, President Roosevelt signed an executive order that banned discrimination by defense contractors based on race, creed, color or national origin. Executive order 8802 was the first law prohibiting employment discrimination and marked the beginning of fair employment practices in the United States.

These protections against employment discrimination were expanded by subsequent Presidents. For example, Executive Order 11246, signed by President Johnson in 1965, expanded the prohibitions against employment discrimination to all government contractors, not just defense contractors.

Every President of the United States since 1965 has enforced these executive orders. Over time, various civil rights laws were passed that contained similar prohibitions against discrimination and employment based on race, creed, color, national origin or sex.

However, on December 12, 2002, President Bush issued an executive order

that for the first time since 1941 actually rolled back the prohibitions against employment discrimination.

□ 2115

Under his executive order 13-279, religious organizations which received Federal funds would be permitted to discriminate in employment based on religion unless there is a specific prohibition.

Now, when the President says that we should remove barriers to faith-based organizations serving as sponsors of federally funded programs, he does not explain what the barriers are. Even without new laws, many faith-based organizations have sponsored federally funded programs for decades, and they administer these programs just like any other sponsor, including compliance with fair employment practices, and that is with positions paid with Federal funds.

Now, in fact, any program which can be funded under this administration's faith-based initiative can be funded without that initiative, without new legislation, and without executive orders if the sponsoring organization agrees not to discriminate in hiring with the Federal money. Not the church money, the Federal money. And today, in fact, 8 percent of the Head Start programs are sponsored by faith-based organizations. If the sponsor insists on discriminating on employment, a barrier exists and the faith-based initiative removes that barrier and allows the sponsor to administer the program and select employees paid with Federal money based on religion.

Now, there was a time in America when people of certain religions were routinely denied jobs solely because of their religious beliefs, but we passed laws to end that invidious discrimination. So when this administration talks about restoring publicly funded religious discrimination, let us remember the old adage that you can put lipstick on a pig, but you cannot pass it off as a beauty queen. Likewise, you can use poll-tested semantics and euphemisms, but you cannot pass this off as anything but ugly discrimination.

And let us take a look at the Head Start program. If the Republican Head Start bill passes, thousands of today's Head Start teachers could lose their jobs if they fail their employer's religious tests. Tens of thousands of already at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children could lose their Head Start teachers if the teachers happen to be of the wrong religion or do not contribute enough to their church. Tens of thousands of parent volunteers could lose their privilege of serving as volunteer teacher aides in their own children's Head Start classrooms based on their religious beliefs. These parent volunteers would be blocked from the opportunity to become trained and paid Head Start teachers solely because they do not share the federally funded employer's religious beliefs. And 29 percent of today's Head Start teachers started off as volunteers.

Now, exactly what kind of head start will children be getting when they see their parents denied the opportunity to become a teacher solely because of their religion? And because 11 a.m. Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week, religious discrimination in Head Start programs will often mean that teachers of the wrong race will not be hired, thereby threatening 33 percent of the Head Start teachers who are African American and nearly 23 percent of the Head Start teachers who are Hispanic.

The result of the Head Start bill sponsored by the Republicans will be that in many federally funded Head Start centers all of the teachers may end up being of one religion and one race and one ethnicity. This is a return to the old days of segregation. If this bill passes, it will be done with Federal money.

I urge my colleagues to strongly consider just what they are voting for when the Head Start bill comes to the floor later this week. We should preserve decades of fair employment practices and reject Republican attempts to allow the most qualified employees to be rejected solely because they fail a religious test.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his statement, and certainly I think we could summarize it by saying that the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus do not want the government to use our tax dollars to discriminate. It is as simple as that. So I thank the gentleman for being so vigilant on that issue consistently.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to my colleague, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN).

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, later this week, the House is poised to reauthorize one of this country's most significant programs. For over 3 decades, this program, Head Start, has given more than 20 million children a chance to succeed in school by providing quality comprehensive services and early education to our Nation's poorest children and families.

Like Medicare and Social Security, as well as other safety net programs that help people overcome poverty and become more productive members of society, the Head Start program is now under attack from Republicans. This is nothing less than an attack on our children, on their chance to realize their potential, and on our communities' futures. Like any mother who will fiercely defend our children against any attack, and also as the representative of the Virgin Islands community, which has not only relied on Head Start but also utilized this program efficiently and to maximum effect, I join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus, as well as the Children's Defense Fund and the National Head

Start Association, and others, to fight tooth and nail for the best start for our children.

The changes to the Head Start program, if passed, would especially have a detrimental effect on minority populations. In fiscal year 2002, 32.6 percent of children served in Head Start were African American and 29.8 percent were Hispanics. Though touted as a bill to improve school readiness of disadvantaged children, it is another one of those good-sounding bills that hides a bad intent. H.R. 2210 would harm the very individuals it says it proposes to help.

Head Start is a unique program because of its comprehensive nature. It provides academic, nutritional, social, and medical services that foster the overall well-being of the child. It helps uncover treatable medical conditions that might otherwise go unnoticed and provides important support to the families of its enrollees.

Head Start currently operates under the direction of Federal performance standards that ensure quality comprehensive services for children and prepares them for school. None of this would be guaranteed under the administration's proposal, and standards are essentially undefined and undermined in the proposed block-grant approach.

Giving Head Start to the States without performance standards and without additional funding, as proposed by the administration, would encourage States which are facing budget deficits to divert Head Start dollars to fill gaps in other programs, and thus spread the dollars more thinly, not adequately serving the needs of the children.

I am glad that thus far those of us who have been committed to Head Start have been able to rid the bill of one of their more terrible ideas, which was to move Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services into the Department of Education. This would have restricted Head Start to a narrow classroom approach without the broad set of social services which are so important.

This raises another concern, the proposed Head Start Reporting System in Child Outcomes. Such required testing of 4-year-olds is developmentally inappropriate. Further, Head Start programs are very culturally diverse, thus making it next to impossible to develop one test that adequately addresses all cultures. Such testing being added to the current child outcomes requirement would also overburden classroom staff with new and unwise assessment requirements.

Dismantling a program that already works is not the way to improve the Head Start program. Improvements to Head Start can be done under the existing structure. H.R. 2210 is meant to lead to the demise of Head Start. We cannot and must not let that happen.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus know firsthand the value of

Head Start, and we are committed to that best start for all of this country's children. We ask the people of this country to voice their opposition to their congressional representatives, and we call on our colleagues to join us and to keep this proven and valuable program intact for yet another generation of children.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for her statement. In considering some of the things that she said, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but just look at and quote a portion of the National Head Start Association's Report entitled, "Dismantling Head Start, The Case for Saving America's Most Successful Early Childhood Development Program," which is dated April 16, 2003.

What they say in that report, the National Head Start Association, is, and I quote: "A hodgepodge of inconsistent and untested State government programs that either will serve fewer children than Head Start does now or will provide less comprehensive services to those children served will be the outcome if this legislation is passed."

The interesting thing is, as I listened to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands, I could not help but think about a school where for the last 12 years I have spoken as the graduation speaker, which is basically a high school for children who are in special education. Two or three years ago I noticed, and I was mentioning to the principal of the school that many of the children who came to participate in the program and who were graduating, many of them had speech defects, some of them seemed to be a bit slow in their reading abilities, and many of them suffered from all kinds of what appeared to be crippling ailments. The thing that the principal pointed out to me is that if, when these children were little, these things had been corrected, they would not have to go a lifetime having to suffer with certain ailments.

Head Start has always been about a comprehensive program providing nutrition, making sure that our children got dental examinations, making sure that they have mental health referrals, and making sure that those things that could be corrected at an early age and be corrected quite easily and at a reasonable price, Head Start has been about the business of doing that. And with this effort to shift Head Start to a block grant-type program and take away standards, it certainly goes against our children.

With that, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the distinguished gentleman from Maryland for his leadership, as well as the members of the Congressional Black Caucus for their leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, we will be debating this question over the next 2 days. I hope as we are presenting our concerns tonight that my colleagues and the constitu-

ents of my colleagues, frankly, will be made aware of that such that the gallery during the time of the debate will be standing room only. Because this is a spear being thrown in the hearts of Americans who have come to understand and love the value of the Head Start program.

The one thing I like about the Head Start program is that it is not a respecter of race or religion, it is an opportunity for children who are in need with respect to their economic status to be able to do better in life. It is a well-proven program. It is a program that is grounded in the fixing of the health condition of young children, the nutrition condition of young children, the psychological condition of young children, and the intellectual aspect of young children.

□ 2130

It is a holistic program which deals with the embracing of the family member, the parent, who gains self-esteem and understands how to be an advocate for their children. It has love intertwined amongst its values so that the children who come know there is love both in the place of learning, but as well from an adult to a child.

This legislation which will go on the floor of the House will literally end Head Start as we know it. This block grant program is risky. My State has just gotten rid of, and I like to use that terminology because it is true, 170,000 children off the SCHIP's program. Right now, parents are receiving letters that there is no room at the inn, there is no opportunity for your children to have good health care.

States across the Nation are finding themselves in bad economic times. Because of that, they will be looking for the dollar anywhere they can find it. When we start sending block grant dollars to these States, clearly we will find that the State's special interests will have the upper hand and the children will be standing outside the door with a sign on the door: No room at the inn.

This bill we will be debating is a classic bait and switch. The GOP claims credit for improving the academic content of Head Start in title I of the bill, but it excludes all but one of those improvements to be implemented by block grants in title II. What we have is a shell game and a shell of a bill, and I am disappointed and disgusted that we find ourselves getting rid of a program that has proven itself well.

But, more importantly, the national head of Head Start has begged the leadership of this Congress, working with the chairpersons of the committee and the author of the bill, to listen to us and sit down and work through this process, and yet we have failed in getting the other side of the aisle to see the light.

Head Start works because children arrive more prepared and they do better in school than low-income children who do not receive Head Start. In addition, Head Start narrows the readiness

gap between Head Start kids and their more affluent peers. Experts say that to expect Head Start to eliminate that gap is totally unrealistic. Poverty is devastating to children, development and success, but it has worked. Head Start has helped children arrive and to be more ready.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the process that we are using now will clearly take a process that has been successful, and I do not know what more to say, throw the spear in the heart or rip it to shreds. I am confused and absolutely outraged that we have a system that does not listen to the people who are using the system.

Did we have large numbers of parents who are in this system now come and argue for a block grant process, or was it the States who were on their knees as it relates to a budget because we give them a lot of unfunded mandates, including Leave No Child Behind because we have a \$550 billion tax cut, and so monies coming from the Federal Government are diminishing and going down and down. That is one of the reasons that States have cut children off the Children's Health Insurance Program. Now we come through the back door to be able to dismantle a program which has made education holistic.

One of the very valuable points of the Head Start program is how they embrace the parents. I have heard parents say Head Start is as good for me as it is for my child. It gives me the opportunity to have input in my child's education. The counselors listen to me if there are problems at home.

I know there are some who are well-endowed, who are financially able and laughing and thinking this is a funny issue, but it is not. It is a serious issue. It is a serious issue because our children are going to be hurt. It is a serious issue because children went to Head Start and had an opportunity to get a meal when they could not get a meal at home, had an opportunity to be immunized, had the opportunity to develop their own self-esteem and self-confidence, had the opportunity that if there were counseling needs that they could secure counseling needs in order to prepare themselves to go to school.

Yes, those teachers that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) spoke of that could be hired without the wall put up or litmus test: What is your religion? What are your beliefs? We now have a program riddled with problems, constitutional violations and separation of church and State and riddled with problems in terms of taking away from the program the very infrastructure that made it right and made it real.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will have a vigorous debate. I have offered amendments that would ensure that the proposal that is going forward does not take the new Federal funds and diminish the funds that are already being used. I hope that is not the case. I hope we will have the kind of debate that will cause my colleagues on the other

side of the aisle to vote down this legislation and leave Head Start as it is in order to ensure that we will continue a plan that will be effective for our children. We should be fighting for the betterment of our children.

I am pleased to join the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and the Congressional Black Caucus to speak for those who cannot speak. I hope that the Chamber is full of Members who are debating this issue, and I hope that the gallery will be filled with parents and children who realize that any vote against the Head Start program that we know and love will be a vote to undermine the futures of our children, today, tomorrow and into the very far future.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my outrage and my disgust at the Majority party's effort to destroy the Head Start Program. The Republican's plan is a sword through the heart of this effective educational program and an insult to America's children.

The Majority party's plan shreds the Head Start Program. The Republicans plan to establish a block grant that will amount to the demise of head start. Specifically, Title II of this bill will end Head Start as we know it. The block grant provisions in the Republican bill are a risky experiment that turns a successful program over to states with unproven expertise and without the federal program quality standard requirements and oversight that are demonstrated to increase school readiness. This bill is a classic "bait and switch." The GOP claims credit for improving the academic content of Head Start in Title I of the bill but excludes all but one of those improvements to be implemented by block grant states in Title II.

The Republican's demolition of Head Start is deplorable because the Head Start program works. Children in the Head Start program arrive at school more prepared and perform better academically than low-income children who are not enrolled in the Head Start program. In addition, although experts say that to expect Head Start to eliminate that gap is "totally unrealistic," the Head Start program narrows significantly the readiness gap between children in Head Start and their more affluent peers.

Head Start helps children arrive at school more ready to learn. However, to expect Head Start to be a cure for the devastating impact of poverty is unrealistic. The idea that the block grant is the solution to closing the school readiness gap is flawed and illogical. State preschool programs are untested and unproven. Not only is there no research showing that state preschool programs produce better results than Head Start, there is no research demonstrating the effectiveness of state preschool programs at all.

The "No Child Left Behind" program was developed because the solution to the achievement gap in students between kindergarten and the 12th grade was the establishment of stronger standards and more federal oversight. Why, then, is the Republican's solution to the same achievement gap in young children to eliminate standards and oversight in Head Start?

The Block Grant Program in the Republican proposal is also damaging to the Head Start Program because it slashes quality com-

prehensive services. The block grant requires states to provide an array of services but doesn't require the same nature, extent or quality of those services. Under the block grant program, none of the thirteen areas of Head Start performance standards (e.g., "education and early child development," "health and safety") that lay out the comprehensive services and high level of quality that have made Head Start successful are required.

In fact, the block grant emphasizes comprehensive services being met through referral of families to outside services for assistance, essentially encouraging states to provide a lower level of services.

The Republican's Head Start bill is also damaging to our children because it weakens educational performance standards. The block grant specifies no minimum threshold on school readiness standards, child-staff ratios or curriculum content. It calls on each state to derive their own school readiness standards and their own ways of measuring progress against those standards. But those standards are undefined in the block grant and vary greatly among the states. Head Start education standards are thorough and strongly based on education performance research.

Having States develop their own performance standards with no direction and no requirements will weaken educational standards overall. Block grants diminish educational oversight and evaluation. States meeting the eligibility criteria for participation in the Block Grant program have their applications approved by the Secretary by default. This means there is no oversight or evaluation of the quality or appropriateness of the state plan. Additionally, there is no minimum threshold requirement of States' internal evaluations of their programs. Meaning a school may define their own success regardless of their actual performance. Under the Head Start program, on the other hand, schools must report annually on their progress, and each school is subjected to a thorough on-site evaluation every three years under the direction of the Department of Health and Human Services. This is meaningful evaluation that provides a better education for our children.

Perhaps the most tragic impact of the Republican's Head Start proposal is that it reduces the role of parents in their children's academic success. Parent are children's most important teachers. Studies have shown that teaching parenting strategies and involving parents in their children's education is strongly related to children's achievement in school. That's why a cornerstone of the Head Start program has been the involvement of parents in their child's development and education, health, nutrition, mental health, community advocacy, and transition activities from preschool to kindergarten.

Family partnership agreements have been critical in getting families to recognize what it takes to promote their child's positive development and early education. But the block grant proposal developed by the Republicans requires minimal parental involvement. No reference is made whatsoever to parent policy councils, or similar provisions, which makes Head Start a local program addressing local needs. Parents have been, in essence, eliminated from the bill.

Finally, the Republicans' Head Start proposals allow decreases in Early Education Services across the State. The block grant

supplantation restrictions permit a decrease in the total expenditures in the State on early education. The block grant bars States from supplanting "non-Federal funds that would otherwise be used," a restriction the Government Accounting Office concluded is almost impossible to enforce because of the difficulty in proving what would have otherwise been used. The block grant also permits supplanting federal funds (for example ESEA Title I preschool funds or surplus TANF funds). So nothing bars States from diverting ESEA or TANF funds to other purposes and using the block grant funds to fill in the holes. This would allow an overall decrease in early education spending within the State.

Mr. Speaker, our Head Start program is under attack, and therefore America's children are under attack. The Republican's Head Start bill is the equivalent of taking an axe to valuable and effective education programs. I implore all Americans and all members of the House of Representatives to speak out against this attack on our children. We must protect our children and we must save the Head Start program.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, the Head Start program, if we did not have one, we would have to invent it, because it has been so effective in preventing so many problems that children quite often develop after they get a little older.

The question has often been asked, why is the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus so concerned about a Head Start program? And I think it is coming out very clearly as Members have spent a lot of time all day working and now they come here tonight, and the reason the Members are here is because they want to make sure that every child is allowed to grow up to be all that God meant for them to be.

The other day I was visiting Sheltonham Juvenile Detention Center in Maryland; and in speaking to the young boys there, most of them between 12-17, I told them when I was 7 years old I could remember young children going off to that detention center. I told them that the march continues even today, and I am 52 years old. I told them that we wanted to make sure that no more of our young men and young women would march off to that institution with shackles around their feet. We want them to be the Dr. Ben Carsons of the world, the teachers, the doctors, the educators, the people who make a difference in our society.

That is why the Congressional Black Caucus takes this time tonight, and we have done it over and over again, to make sure that we do everything in our power during our watch not to allow a very significant and very effective program that helps our children to be dismantled.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) for holding this Special Order on Head Start and for the gentleman's leadership to ensure that we continue to raise the level of awareness

in terms of making sure that our country knows what is going on here in Washington, D.C. I thank the gentleman for remaining consistent and ensuring that we do have this opportunity to speak out and to wake up America.

Tonight of course this Special Order, this discussion is with regard to Head Start, a program whose obituary is but a few days away if the administration has its way. If the administration has its way, this would be the beginning of the end for Head Start. Later this week, we will see the Republicans overhaul or at least try to overhaul the Head Start system, a program which has fundamentally provided children with an opportunity to succeed. Since its inception in 1965, it has reached over 20 million people. It is a program that still continues to touch and improve this country's low-income children by providing them opportunities to succeed. It really is the best example of Leave No Child Behind.

In my hometown of Oakland, California, over 1,600 children are part of our area Head Start programs; and across the country last year, Head Start and Early Head Start programs worked with more than 900,000 children in over 2,500 local programs. But the Bush administration has indicated that, like so many other beneficial policies and programs that they are dismantling, Head Start must also be dismantled. They are saying that it must be undone, it must be gutted. How are they doing this? They are doing this in several crucial ways.

First, they want to block grant Head Start, but block granting Head Start would be very dangerous. Block granting Head Start would mean creating 50 potential new bureaucracies in each State. Not only would that be expensive, depriving these programs of money to use for the real goal of providing early childhood development and education for children, but it would weaken the oversight and evaluation of these programs.

And, of course, block granting Head Start is especially disturbing at this point in our Nation's history in the economic downturn and jobs depression that we are, unfortunately, experiencing. At a time when State budgets are in such crisis and with the States able to determine exactly how they are going to spend their money, the possibility of using this money for things other than Head Start I think would be too tempting. I would hate to see our children caught up in State budget battles. It is too risky, and they do not deserve that.

Perhaps worst of all, Republicans want to turn Head Start into a program that relies on an exclusively academic program rather than what has been proven to be successful, and that is a comprehensive program for low-income children. What they want now is for children as early as age 4 to take a literacy test. Can Members imagine giving a 4-year-old a literacy test by

which they would be evaluated? Gone would be the program components of nutrition and immunization programs, as well as counseling and other very important program components that provide for the support not only of the child but of the family. This focus on test scores for young children really is unbelievable.

At this particular time we should be doing more to improve and to increase the program, not reduce it. The truth is, we are still not reaching enough children. As I said earlier, over 1,600 Oakland students are in our Head Start programs. On any particular day in my hometown, 300-400 children are on waiting lists for Head Start centers. Head Start officials tell me all 30 centers have children on waiting lists, meaning all of the areas in my city are being affected.

Several months ago when families of Head Start heard about this very backwards initiative and proposal, 300-400 rallied immediately at city hall and they said in no uncertain terms if it is not broke, why fix it. They said that they wanted more children included in Head Start and that it was working in the way that we know it has always worked and to not tamper with it.

In fact, several of them told me we needed to focus on the fact that 300-400 children in Oakland are far too many to begin school already behind. They insisted, as we are insisting tonight, that Head Start remain intact. We must not stand by and allow the Bush administration to dismantle a successful, proven program like Head Start.

The President wants to kill one of the country's most successful programs, and I do not understand it. I encourage all of my colleagues to join with the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to resist this administration's very wrong and backward policies. I encourage our colleagues to do everything possible to avoid having one of the greatest early childhood education efforts become an obituary, a tombstone on which is written "Head Start was a great program."

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her statement, and I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), a former Head Start teacher and someone who has spoken out consistently on this issue with a tremendous amount of passion.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus for this and many of the other Special Orders he has organized in order to make sure that everyone in this Chamber and throughout the country understands the grave changes the President and the Republican Party are trying to make to the Head Start program.

□ 2145

Mr. Speaker, 38 years ago, I had the great fortune to help organize one of the first Head Start programs in this

country under the War on Poverty. My involvement with Head Start has been one of the most defining experiences of my life. Not only did I help to organize one of the first Head Start programs in the country working with the community, I went to work for Head Start as an assistant teacher and I was inspired to go back to school and to get my degree. Not only was I inspired, I saw the inspiration that Head Start did for many parents, many folks in the community.

Today I sat in the Committee on Rules where I went to try and offer some amendments to strengthen the Head Start program and to not allow the Head Start program to be block-granted to the States. I literally sat there and listened to the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce and others talking about Head Start without really knowing or understanding what Head Start is. I did not recognize the program that they were talking about. And it dawned on me that they did not know this program. It dawned on me that many of them had never spent any time in a Head Start classroom. I heard descriptions of what the Republicans would like to do with the Head Start program, talking about somehow making it a program where children would be involved with literacy and trying to prepare them for the public schools and education in new and different ways.

Mr. Speaker, they did not know that in the beginning of Head Start, a lot of work was done to determine what would be the best way to provide an early childhood education experience for children who came from disadvantaged homes and disadvantaged communities. We tested everything from Montessori to other approaches to dealing with children. Finally it was concluded, after all of the study and all of the work, that the way to deal with the children from disadvantaged communities was to focus on the whole child, the entire child, and bring the family in to helping to determine the educational destiny of their children. In doing so, we felt that all of the children needed to have a physical examination to determine their health. We also thought that it was important to have a strong parent involvement component in this program. We also knew that it was important to have nutrition involved in the program.

And we were right. And we also determined that we had to reduce the ratio of children to teachers, because at that time single-teacher classrooms headed by one teacher was trying to manage 35 and 40 kids in the public schools. So we reduced those ratios to 1 to 5. For a classroom of 15, one adult to every five students in the Head Start class. And it worked. Because we had physical examinations, we discovered learning disabilities, dyslexia, other kinds of problems, sight problems, hearing problems, all kinds of problems that would have caused children to fail, to be placed in special edu-

cation classes and not to be able to succeed; and we dealt with that, with this new model that was created.

And now we have people talking about they want a program to teach literacy. They do not understand that when you build self-esteem, when you introduce children to books for the first time, when you teach them to love books and to care for books, that is the best way to get children reading. When you teach the parents through the parent involvement program to read to the children, you are developing children who not only will love reading and love books but will become great readers and will be very, very literate and be able to succeed in the public schools and in the schools that they will go to.

I listened to those who were describing how they wanted to change the program. They really do not have any good reasons for changing this program. The only thing that they are doing is carrying out a conservative Republican philosophy that gets government out of providing a real safety net for the least of these. They are not only following the line, the philosophy of the Republican Party in divesting itself from programs that invest in people. We see it every day. It is not only Head Start. It is the section 8 program where they are trying to get out of the business of helping to provide safe and secure housing for people who cannot afford it with a subsidy; and so they are marching down this conservative road, of divesting government from being involved in programs that were created under the Great Society, programs of Johnson and Kennedy and getting rid of government responsibility.

Unfortunately, we are in the minority around here and we may not be able to stop them. They were so arrogant that they are going to have a closed rule where we will not be able to offer any amendments. They are going to have a closed rule so that there will not be any discussion and any real debate about how we ought to be strengthening Head Start. And the arrogance goes further than that. They are going to debate this on a Friday when people are rushing off to catch airplanes so that they can limit the debate and shut it down and literally roll out of here having block-granted Head Start and eight of our programs. This is sinful and it is shameful. They are destroying one of the most successful programs that we have ever had in this country, a program that has been commended and supported by every President since the inception of Head Start.

There is no reason for this. Some of the amendments that I tried to offer, one was an amendment that would allow parents to count the hours they volunteer in a Head Start classroom against welfare work requirements. Another would establish a parent service awards program. The amendment would authorize a \$1,000 voucher to up to 5,000 individuals to be used for the

cost of any education or job training program approved by any State or the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Eligible recipients of the award are parents who volunteer in the classroom at least 5 hours a week for the entire Head Start year.

A third would require each Head Start program to establish and maintain a waiting list of all children who are eligible for and apply for enrollment in a Head Start program, but are unable to participate because of lack of funding. If there is funding remaining after the initial disbursement of funds, this amendment authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to distribute the remaining funds. And the last would remove title II of the bill and thereby ensure that Head Start can function as designed with strong educational standards, low child-to-staff ratios, and high-quality social services. In addition, the amendment ensures that funds designated for Head Start will go directly to local Head Start programs and the States will not have the opportunity to divert Head Start funds to close gaps in their budget or for other priorities.

I was not the only Member of Congress up there. In fact, I would guess there were 15 or 20 Members who were present, all interested in offering an amendment or two in an attempt to minimize the damage that the Republicans are doing to the Head Start program. Many of these amendments were well thought out and would improve the program. Yet the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), has requested a closed rule with no amendments to be permitted except maybe a manager's amendment and a Democratic substitute.

Let me just close, Mr. Speaker, by saying, if, in fact, this Congress allows the block-granting of Head Start, it will be one of the worst public policy decisions that has been made in the history of the Congress of the United States of America. Any time you have public policymakers who are willing to take a successful program that has been lauded and commended by everybody and there is nobody supporting the block-granting of the program, nobody asking that some changes like this be made to the program and undermine the ability of poor children and low-income, working families to have an experience of preschool that would help to make children more successful, then we ought to be called to task for it, and we ought to be challenged in our elections for it. We do not need to do this. I would ask the Republicans to rethink this wrongheaded policy. They may not do it, but we will all pay a price in the long run for it.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for her statement.

Mr. Speaker, tonight it is a very sad time when we consider a program, as the gentlewoman from California said,

that has been so successful; and it is a sad time when a program that has touched so many lives and built so many lives so successfully is being attacked. We do consider it to be just that. One of the things that the gentlewoman from California talked about was she went to the Committee on Rules and she asked a question, why is it that the Republican leadership is so afraid of amendments to this bill to make it a better bill and to make the Head Start program better? She went on to say that there is a question as to whether or not they really understand what Head Start is all about. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "You cannot lead where you do not go and you cannot teach what you don't know." The fact is that there are so many children like the 4-year-old that I saw just a month ago graduating from our Head Start program at the Union Baptist Church in my district reading on the level of a third or fourth grader. That is what Head Start is all about.

And so it gives me great pleasure to yield to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), who has consistently been at the forefront of lifting people up and trying to make a difference in their lives. I know that the gentleman from Illinois believes very strongly in the statement that I make quite often and that is that our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. I want to thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding. I also want to commend him for his outstanding leadership on not only this but a myriad of issues confronting America as he continues in his role as chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. I also want to commend my good friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ), for his outstanding leadership as chairman of the Hispanic Caucus as we come together to work on issues that are mutually important to both groups, but are really important to all of America.

For about the last almost hour, we have heard many of my colleagues extol the virtues of Head Start. Since 1965, the Head Start program has helped over 21 million of America's neediest children gain the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary for success in life. However, the positive effects of Head Start extend far beyond the individual child in the classroom. As a matter of fact, as we have heard, it helps the entire family. One of the most important aspects of Head Start is the involvement of parents. Through their involvement in the program, Head Start parents gain invaluable skills that have a positive and lasting effect on all of their children. Research has shown that Head Start parents demonstrate improved parenting skills, are more likely to begin preparing for employment, and gain the skills necessary to effectively advocate for their children. Head Start parents learn the importance of being

involved and caring role models for their children. They are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities, such as home visits, literacy classes, volunteering in the classroom, and taking part in the governing of the program. As a matter of fact, we just heard one of the most outstanding members of this body, the gentlewoman from California, talk about how she was inspired and motivated as a parent.

In the 2001-2002 program year, more than 876,000 parents volunteered at their local Head Start program. After participating in the program, Head Start parents typically continue to take a strong interest in the education of their children and are likely to continue their involvement with the program.

□ 2200

In fact, 23 percent of Head Start staff members in Illinois and in many other sites across the Nation are current or former Head Start parents.

The original bill sought to block grant the entire program. Fortunately, as a result of the hue and cry of Head Start activists, program directors, Democrats and Members of this body and other bodies and others have forced some back-peddling, and now the Head Start reauthorization bill seeks to implement an experimental program in eight States, providing block grants to integrate Head Start in preexisting State preschool programs.

These block grants, as we know, will undermine the comprehensive family-based intent of the program. They will allow States to determine their own standards, guidelines, and qualifications. These States could then decide to implement Head Start as a pre-kindergarten program, cutting out nutrition, vaccinations, dental care, medical care, and other important services currently guaranteed to children in the program. With the current State budget crisis, these services will almost certainly be eliminated, leaving the low-income children served by Head Start with no way to receive these extremely important services.

Unlike Head Start, typical pre-kindergarten programs are half-day programs that do not fully address parents' child care needs. These programs also focus primarily on building a foundation for academic skills, overlooking the importance of developing the social, emotional, and behavior skills vital to classroom survival.

Finally, these programs typically do not teach parents to actively advocate for their children. Low-income children deserve safe, caring environments. They deserve to have their parents involved in their lives. Low-income parents need to learn how to provide for the needs of their children. It is clear that if Head Start reauthorization is passed as written, it will be a tragedy for our Nation's low-income families and will not provide the comprehensive approach to readiness that our children so greatly need.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to reinforce what has already been said. That is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." If it does not need change, do not change it. If it is working, then let it work in such a way that it seriously benefits all of the children.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) for his outstanding leadership.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his statement.

Mr. Speaker, tonight the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus have come together to address the Head Start program; and, as I said a little bit earlier, our concerns go very deep.

Every time I come into this Chamber, I cannot help but think about the day that I was sworn in. My father, who only had a first grade education, sat up in the balcony. After the swearing-in ceremony, he came down with tears in his eyes, and I asked him the question, I said, Dad, why are you crying?

And I understood, first of all, about his history. He was a man who was born in Manning, South Carolina, and his people who owned the land where he was a sharecropper denied him the opportunity to get a decent education. He had gone some 70 years deprived of the kind of education that he deserved. So here he was in April of 1996, looking down on his son who had gotten the education. And I said, Dad, are you upset? I mean, are you happy, so happy that you have tears in your eyes about your son being elevated to a Congressman and being a lawyer and a phi beta kappa? He said, no, that is not what it is about. He said, I am crying out of pain. I am crying over the fact that I have gone a lifetime and finally I see what I could have been.

And what this is all about, this entire discussion here tonight, is about little children who have been born into a world and born into an environment where the income level of their parents may not be all that it is for others, and all they are doing is trying to be all that God has meant for them to be.

One great sculptor said that not long ago at one time he was sculpturing and his sculptures were selling for about \$20. He went back to his grandfather and he said, grandfather, your sculptures sold for more. I mean, what is it? How did that happen? And the grandfather said, you have to look into the wood; it is already there. And so he began to look into the wood and see the sculpture, and he began to cut away and finally came up with what he knew was already there.

The fact is that these children who, again, are trying to simply be all that God meant for them to be, it is already there. The question is whether we, as adults, will do all that we can to bring it out of them.

We are convinced in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and in the Congressional Black Caucus that we should be doing more, not less. We should not

be merely raising the Head Start budget from \$6.8 billion to \$6.9 billion. That is not enough, because there is still, even with that slight increase, there are still 40 percent of all of the children who deserve a head start and who deserve to be in the program unable to do it because we have not put the money forward.

We are concerned about the fact that we are now saying let us experiment with these eight States and give them the block grant funds to pass on to the Head Start programs. We are worried that that money may get diverted somewhere else, and the kids that really need that money they will not get it. Because budgets throughout our Nation, almost every single governor is struggling with a deficit, and we are very clear that when they are struggling with deficits it is probably quite likely that the money, all of the money that is destined for those Head Start programs will not get there.

So we do not want to be in a situation where 30 years from now, 20 years from now, 40 years from now, children who are then grown up are looking at their children and saying what my father said to me: Now I know what I could have been, what I could have been. The fact is that we have an opportunity here today, this week, to make sure that all of our children, all of our children, every one of them, has an opportunity to get off to a good head start.

Finally let me say this: So often I hear my colleagues talk about what they want for our children. But I ask the question, if their children, if they were talking about their own children, the children that have their blood running through their veins and who came from their womb, would they want an improved Head Start program if their child had to be a subject of the Head Start program? I would submit that they would want a better program, that they would not want funds diverted.

So this evening, Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, all of the Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus who have come forward to lift up our children so that they can be all the best that they can be.

Mr. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I raise in support of Hard Start as we know it. Rather than dismantling Head Start, I call on the leadership of both parties to make Head Start bipartisan as it has been for 38 years, to keep the current Federal-to-local structure of Head Start intact rather than supporting any measures to shift oversight to any number of states, to maintain and improve upon current Federal performance standards and oversight—to ensure high quality and the array of comprehensive services offered by Head Start, to provide for further improvements including higher teacher qualifications, matched with provisions for funding teacher training and higher salaries, and to move towards fully funding Head Start, beginning with at least a \$1 billion increase for FY 2004.

All the Head Start programs in Ohio say that if the States inherit control of the program, it

is likely the current comprehensive focus for Head Start will be lost. This change could eliminate critical services, such as promoting children's social and emotional well-being in addition to their academic skills, health and dental screenings and treatment, mental health services, parent-education programs and social services.

They say that: families who are currently receiving help but have income above 150 percent of poverty will lose their assistance the next time their eligibility is predetermined. The changes also include an increase in parent fees, which will increase the amount families pay by an average of \$50.

They say that the rates for family childcare providers will be lowered from the 75th percentile of the market rate to the 60th percentile, making it difficult for those providers to serve families receiving assistance.

The shame of it all is that the most eligible children are denied childcare assistance. Nationally, only 1 out of 7 children eligible for childcare assistance under Federal law receives help. States have long waiting lists for children help. (At the end of 2002, one-third of the states continued to put low-income working families on waiting lists.)

In Ohio 38,081 children are enrolled in the Federal program and 18,173 in the State program.

Ohio has 837 centers. This does not count home-based services; these are actual centers. Of these, 229 are only federally funded, 109 are only State funded, and the other 499 are mixed—both State and Federal funds.

Cuts in Ohio will mean that 18,500 children will lose their child care assistance by September to help the State save \$268 million. On April 1, the State will decrease income eligibility from 185 percent of the Federal poverty level (\$27,787 for a family of three) to 150 percent (\$22,530 for a family of three).

Support Head Start as we know it. Fully fund this successful program!

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

BIPARTISANSHIP BRINGS POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ISSUE

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

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor of the House tonight again to talk about the issue of prescription drugs and the prices that Americans pay compared to the prices that people pay in the rest of the industrialized world. I will have colleagues joining me tonight from time to time from both sides of the political aisle. We have Republicans, we have Democrats, we have people who would consider themselves conservative and, hopefully, some who will be coming down who consider themselves to be liberals or progressives.

Because this is not an issue of right versus left. It is an issue of right versus wrong. Tomorrow night we hope to do another Special Order on a bipartisan basis to talk about this issue again, be-

cause I think this is the kind of issue that we need to talk about, that Members need to understand.

Mr. Speaker, I, in the past, have said that the fact that Americans pay so much more than the people in Canada or in Germany or Switzerland or France, I have always said that it is not so much shame on the pharmaceutical industry, it is shame on us. And it is really our responsibility. Our own FDA works for the Congress and not the other way around.

But, tonight, my tone is going to start to change because of some of the things that the pharmaceutical industry has been doing over the last several weeks.

President Reagan said, if you tell something that is not true but you do not know it is not true, that is a mistake. If you say something that is not true and you know it is not true, that is a lie. And in the last several weeks we have seen things that really do border on lies, because the people who are telling the stories know that they are not true. We are going to talk about that tonight.

I want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL), for joining me tonight in this Special Order. I know that he has had an incredibly long day and he can only stay for a few minutes, so I would like to yield to him so that he can talk about the issue and the problem and what we in Congress maybe can do to bring some parity and fairness in terms of the prices that our consumers are forced to pay for these life-saving drugs.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good colleague and friend, the gentleman from Minnesota, for his leadership on this issue, as he has shown time and again. The test of leadership is the ability of an individual, in the face of a great deal of opposition, to consistently stay whole and true to his principles; and the gentleman has done that, even in the face of not only political opposition but leadership opposition within his own party on this issue.

Others of both parties, a cross-section that cuts a big swathe within our Congress, members of what one would call the extreme right and members on the extreme left, have come together on this. I think it is because, one, I think this legislation speaks to our common set of values; and, two, it is because all of us cannot be hard to the fact that because we have heard stories repeatedly of busloads and carloads of individuals who have gone over the border to Canada to buy medications that are life-saving and necessary and have done that as the only means in which they can afford their medication and what has been prescribed. All of us have heard those stories and that is why all of us have come here.

Now, some may have talked about price controls. Others may have talked about just letting the system as is continue. This legislation, which we put together under the gentleman's leadership, uses market forces to bring prices