

dropped out of high school get their GED, and CAMP assists migrant students in their first year of college with both counseling and stipends.

The children of migrant farm workers face the highest dropout rate among all other Hispanic American ethnic groups. Current estimates place the dropout rate for migrant at between 50 and 60 percent. Before the Federal Government created CAMP programs, there was no record of a migrant child having completed college. With HEP and CAMP these students are making amazing progress. At the State University of New York at Oneonta, both programs serve students from migrant and seasonal farm working families from New York, Maine, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. This year, Luis, a New Yorker and former HEP and CAMP student will be entering as a sophomore at SUNY-Oneonta. Luis' experience as a migrant youth is shared by countless other children of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

For many migrant children, moving from state to state can take its toll. For Luis, it resulted in a pattern of repeating grades until he quit school to work with his father in the vineyards in Western New York. A year later, he learned about High School Equivalency Program, HEP. With the assistance of the HEP program, he earned his GED, applied to college, and was accepted to SUNY last year as biology major. As a CAMP student, Luis received vital academic, social, and financial support during his first year of college, the most critical year for most first-generation college students.

Luis now mentors other CAMP students, is a member of the Migrant AmeriCorps program and has maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.04. Securing additional resources for HEP and CAMP will help ensure the dreams of students like Luis become reality. I also support increasing funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions, HSIs.

For New York this increase will help 12 colleges and universities expand their capacity to serve a large and growing number of Hispanic students. By supporting these institutions we are recognizing the large contribution they make to increasing access to higher education for traditionally underserved communities, and are making the dream of college a reality for many more Hispanics. The condition of America's future will depend upon how well we meet the demand for an educated workforce.

Cuts in education programs might help balance the books in the short-term, but it is a bad idea for our economy in the long-term. We need a highly skilled workforce to compete in this global economy and investing in the education and training of our Hispanic population will help our Nation meet this challenge.

I therefore urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask that we now be in a period of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DC SCHOOLS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate Appropriations Committee passed legislation that has real promise, and that promise goes to the heart of offering the schoolchildren of this city, the District of Columbia, a genuine, a real opportunity to achieve an education. Specifically, I am talking about the DC Choice Program, a program my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator JUDD GREGG, has worked so very hard on over the past several months; an issue that other colleagues, especially MIKE DEWINE, the Senator from Ohio, has been so committed to; an issue that colleagues from the other side of the aisle, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BYRD, are both committed to. Indeed, both showed, I believe, bold and courageous action on behalf of the Capital City's schoolchildren.

The District of Columbia appropriations bill provides \$40 million for public schools here in the Capital City. That money will be divided between public charter schools and a new private school tuition program that would offer up to \$7,500 per student for about 2,000 additional students.

Regrettably, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle supported doing nothing, supported the status quo. They refuse to allow 2,000 of the District's schoolchildren who are from hard-working, low-income families to have that opportunity of earning a better education. They would rather trap these children in failing schools. They would rather tolerate failure than take a chance at success.

The record of the District's public schools is shocking. Despite unprecedented Federal and local spending in the District totaling about \$12,000 per student, the District's scores are the lowest in the Nation. Only 10 percent of the District's fourth graders are proficient at reading. Fewer than 12 percent of District fourth graders can write at grade level. Only 6 percent of District fourth graders can do math at a proficient level.

This is a disgrace. DC's public schools are graduating children who cannot read, who cannot write, who cannot add, and who cannot subtract. Would any of us in this Chamber allow our children to be illiterate and unable to do simple fourth grade math problems? The answer is obvious.

In fact, many of those who oppose Choice for the Capital's schoolchildren send their own children to private schools where their children are able to read great literature, learn calculus, learn physics, and dream about careers in anthropology, or careers in aeronautics, and, indeed, go on to competitive colleges and universities.

Unlike some of my colleagues here on the Hill, the locally elected officials from the District itself want the very same for the District's school age kids. They are determined that the District schoolchildren will learn to read and to write and thereby share in that American dream. The city's Mayor, Anthony Williams, understands that. The DC Board of Education president, Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and city council member Kevin P. Chavous are all courageously advancing the cause of universal education for kids here in the District of Columbia. They understand it. Most importantly, the people who understand it and who are leading the fight are the parents of the kids here in the District.

Across the city, parents are lining up in order to obtain better options and better alternatives for their children. The need is so intense that the District Public School Choice Programs are now way oversubscribed. Each year, more than 1,000 schoolchildren are "wait-listed" for the city's magnet programs. Charter schools educate right around 15 percent of DC kids, with nearly 11,500 children in attendance and another 1,000 on waiting lists to get into these charter schools.

When John Walton and Ted Forstmann invested \$2 million in the Children's Scholarship Fund here in the District, more than 10,000 families applied for about 1,000 seats.

Virginia Walden-Ford, the executive director of DC Parents for School Choice and a mother of three, knows first hand how desperately parents want a better education for their children. She tells me that each week she receives in her organization hundreds of calls just about this issue of having a better choice, a better alternative. She knows first hand the desperation of these parents.

Virginia had to take matters into her own hands when her son was having trouble in school. He was skipping school. He was having run-ins with the law. He felt like no one cared. He also felt peer pressure to not work hard, to not achieve, to not aspire. Virginia, as a parent, was terrified. We all would feel this way. She was terrified of what would happen if her son stayed in that environment—if he stayed or was trapped along this path that would lead to nowhere. So she decided as a parent to make a difference and to make a change. She sent him to a private school. And within 2 weeks she tells me her son, who she was so worried about being trapped in this environment in which there was no escape whatsoever and no opportunity to achieve that American dream, was transformed—no more getting into trouble, no more skipping school, no more getting into trouble with the police, no more skipped homework assignments. Virginia asked him why. What made that difference? What led to that transformation?

Her son told her very directly that the teachers for the first time cared

about whether he learned. At the new school, skipping class and not showing up the next day was a major infraction. For the first time, Virginia was told by her son that he actually felt safe walking through the school's hallways. Not only did Virginia's young son graduate, but unlike many of his friends at the old school who had dropped out before graduation, he graduated with a 3.8 grade average. And, indeed, today he proudly serves in the Marine Corps. Virginia believes that going to private school literally saved her son's life.

That is one story. There are thousands of stories like that in terms of better opportunities. But there are thousands more parents who want the same for their kids, who want that opportunity, who simply don't have that opportunity but who will now have that opportunity if the bill that was passed yesterday in the Appropriations Committee ultimately becomes law.

It is nonsensical to withhold from these parents the opportunity to have their kids be able to go to a school where they will thrive, where they will have those new opportunities.

Yesterday, as I looked at the vote and who voted which way, it is clear that a majority of Senators in the Appropriations Committee—and I believe a majority of Senators on the floor of this Senate—are parents like Virginia who will demand better options for their children, and thus the Senate will support giving them those options.

I, for one, support each child's right to learn to read and write and add and subtract. Basic education for our schoolchildren simply cannot wait. It is incumbent upon us to act.

Cardinal McCarrick, who is the Archbishop of Washington, DC, understands how crucial choice is to the future of this city's kids. I had the opportunity to discuss with Cardinal McCarrick this very issue. He stressed to me the importance of this piece of legislation to open up that opportunity to families and to kids all across the District. He wrote me a letter earlier this summer, which I ask unanimous consent to be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON,
Washington, DC, July 21 2003.

Hon. Senator Bill Frist,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: As the U.S. Senate committees review legislative proposals for appropriations to fund the DC School Initiative, I would like to restate in the strongest terms my support for this initiative and all that it represents.

Our Catholic Schools in the District of Columbia have served the children and families of Washington for over 100 years, and we are determined to continue to provide for these families in the future. We are committed to the City and to all its families and children. In fact, the majority of our students in the District are not Catholic. As stewards of education we recognize the need for every student to have equal access to educational opportunities that will best serve the needs of

both the family and the child. It is because of this commitment that we wanted to work in partnership with Mayor Williams and our colleagues on the City Council, on the School Board, in the Superintendent's office, and in the private sector. Working together, putting politics aside, we realized the need for a three-sector initiative. It is a simple collaborative model, and yet it continues to remain a controversial concept to some.

This three-sector concept has formed the basis for the DC School Funding Initiative. This approach provides the opportunity for all in leadership to support the strongest strategy to date for improving and increasing educational options for low-income families. Just as a triangular structure is the sturdiest of structures, because each side reinforces the other, the three-sector approach allows the whole of DC education to be greater than the sum of its parts.

The Archdiocese of Washington is committed to this solid approach and strongly supports legislation that provides 45 to 50 million dollars over five years for:

a. DC public schools to bolster the Transformation schools, to recruit principals and teachers, and to provide for professional development programming,

b. DC charter schools to support building renovations; and

c. Non-public scholarships for the neediest families in the District to be used to pay for the cost of education at the school of choice.

Let me just say a further word about the third part of this triangle, the help for parents who want to exercise their right to choose a non-public school for the education of their children. If they are poor—as so many of our families here in the District are—they have the right in theory, but they cannot exercise it in fact because they cannot pay the cost of their education. Some are working three and four jobs just to make their choice possible and your heart breaks to see this sacrifice made year after year. This three-sector program will help them as it will help the youngsters in the public system as well.

It is our sincere belief that this partnership model is significant and worthy of legislative support, funding, and assessment. This unique model of cooperation and strength affords all three sectors opportunities to engage in shared research, planning, and the continued development of services to support all children.

Hoping these legislative initiatives will be successful, the Catholic Schools of Washington, DC are prepared to accept 1,200 to 2,000 students. Many of these students may attend schools that already serve low-income neighborhoods. In fact eleven of our Center City Consortium schools currently serve a population that is 99% non-white, with 65% non-Catholic, 50% living below the poverty level, and 70% of the students living in single-parent households. More important, these schools are successful—with 100% of the graduating students accepted at Catholic High Schools, where 99% of the graduates go on to college. The average cost of educating our children is approximately \$7,000 per child compared to the \$12,000 cost for the District of Columbia. This ground-breaking initiative to participate as partners in education is an opportunity each of our District of Columbia Schools welcomes.

This is a unified and comprehensive strategy to level the playing field for under-resourced communities by ensuring economically disadvantaged families a chance to pursue all options, giving all children access to quality educational choices.

The Archdiocese remains committed to the three-sector initiative. Together with the Mayor, the City Government, the School Board, and our colleagues in all charter and

non-public schools, we share this dream of giving the children and the families of our nation's Capital one of the finest educational opportunities in the land. All three sectors need to be supported for this partnership strategy to succeed. Each sector gains strength and stability from the other sectors. This is a partnership representing a long-term commitment of cooperation for the good of our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our commitment to this vision.

With every good wish, I am

Faithfully yours,

THEODORE CARDINAL MCCARRICK,
Archbishop of Washington.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in that letter, he tells me that he regularly in the course of his counseling and in the course of his work sees parents who work “three and four jobs just to make their choice possible.”

He goes on to write that “your heart breaks to see this sacrifice made year after year.”

My fellow colleagues, parents are breaking their backs in this District to send their kids to schools that work, schools that really teach, schools that really provide an environment in which learning can take place. When you learn that only 10 percent—only 1 out of 10—of the District's fourth graders are proficient readers, your heart breaks all over again. These children almost certainly will never be able to catch up.

I would like to close these brief remarks with a statement from the editorial page of the Washington Post. Although I don't quote the editorial pages of the Washington Post often, on this issue the Post is absolutely correct. The editorial reads:

It is inexcusable for a group of Senators, many from distant States, to turn this into a partisan issue of their own. Instead, they should fight to make the District of Columbia school system work better for more children, in public, private and charter schools across the city.

“They should fight to make the DC school system work better for more children.”

Mr. President, we should—and we must—fight to do just that. The District schoolchildren should not be trapped in the shadows of our shining city on the hill. They deserve, and their families deserve, our best efforts to make their classrooms models of success. They deserve, just as much as any other child—as much as a child of a U.S. Senator—to achieve the American dream. We can give them that opportunity.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have a few comments to make about the fall