

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, at 10 a.m. to hold a nomination hearing.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, at 2:30 p.m. to hold a hearing on the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. in order to conduct a hearing entitled: "The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Federal Government: A Model Public-Private Partnership Accelerating Research Toward a Cure."

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 19, 2007 at 2:30 p.m. to hold an open hearing.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Crystal Bridgeman, a fellow on my staff, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this session.

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

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Jodie Sweitzer, an intern with my staff on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, be granted the privileges of the floor during the remainder of debate on the energy bill.

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

IMPROVING HEAD START ACT OF 2007

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 137, H.R. 1429, the Head Start authorization bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1429) to reauthorize the Head Start Act, to improve program quality, to expand access, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome the Senate's action on this important legislation, the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

I commend Senator ENZI, Senator DODD, and Senator ALEXANDER for their bipartisan cooperation on this legislation, and I thank all the Senators on the HELP Committee for their contributions to improving Head Start to meet today's challenges. We began this process four years ago. Today, our bipartisan efforts have resulted in the strengthening of a 42 year old program that has been a lifeline of support for millions of low-income children preparing for school and for life.

Since the War on Poverty, Head Start has delivered the assistance needed to enable disadvantaged children to arrive at school, ready to learn. Its comprehensive services provide balanced meals for children, support visits to the doctor and dentist, and teach young children important learning and social skills. It helps families with the greatest needs get on their feet, and encourages parents to participate actively in their child's early development.

Years of evaluation have demonstrated that Head Start works. A Federal survey found that Head Start children make both academic and social gains under the program, and that these gains continue when children enter kindergarten. Once Head Start children complete their kindergarten year, they are near the national average of 100 in key areas, with scores of 93 in vocabulary, 96 in early writing, and 92 in early math.

Over the years, we've also learned more about how Head Start can be improved. This reauthorization applies that knowledge to make modifications in the program, and it will enable Head Start to be even more effective in the years ahead.

In this legislation, we expand Head Start to include thousands of low-income children who are not yet served by the program. We provide for better coordination of Head Start with State programs for low-income children. We strengthen Head Start's focus on critical early learning skills and school readiness. We enhance the educational goals for Head Start teachers. We preserve the community-based structure of the program to ensure that the needs of local neighborhoods and their children are the top priority. We also provide greater accountability for the program, including new policies to provide improved monitoring visits and guarantee that programs with deficiencies receive needed attention and support.

To strengthen Head Start, we must begin by providing more resources for it. Child poverty is on the rise again and the need for Head Start is greater than ever. Today, less than 50 percent of children eligible for Head Start participate in the program. Hundreds of

thousands of 3- and 4-year-olds are left out because of inadequate funding. Early Head Start serves only 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. It is shameful that 97 percent of the children eligible for Early Head Start have no access to it. This legislation expands access to Head Start to serve as many infants, toddlers, and preschool children and their families as possible.

The bill establishes goals to increase funding and expand the program to provide nearly \$8 billion worth of services by 2010. These funding levels are essential to carry out the essential reforms in the legislation and to serve thousands of additional children and families.

In 1994, we enacted Early Head Start to benefit infants, toddlers, and their families. It has worked ever since. Early Head Start children have larger vocabularies, lower levels of aggressive behavior, and higher levels of sustained attention than children not enrolled in the program. Early Head Start parents are more likely to play with their children and read to them. These activities increase a child's desire to learn and strengthen a family's commitment to education. Our bill doubles the size of Early Head Start over the course of the authorization, and includes a commitment to serve 56,000 additional children.

The bill also establishes a Head Start Collaboration Office in every State to improve support for Head Start children, to align Head Start with kindergarten classrooms, and to strengthen its local partnerships with other agencies. These offices will work hand in hand with the Head Start network of training and technical assistance to support grantees in meeting the goals of preparing children for school.

I'm especially pleased that the bill provides the blueprint needed to upgrade and strengthen other early childhood education programs and services in the states. The bill provides an active role for states in coordinating early childhood education and development programs, and designates an Early Care and Education Council in each state to undertake the activities essential to developing a comprehensive system for the nation's youngest children. The councils will conduct an inventory of children's needs, develop plans for data collection, support early childhood educators, review and upgrade early learning standards, and make recommendations on technical assistance and training. For States ready to move forward and implement their statewide plan, the legislation offers \$100 million to support incentive grants for States to implement these important efforts.

Over the past four decades, Head Start has developed quality and performance standards to guarantee a full range of services, so that children are educated in the basics about letters, numbers, and books, and are also healthy, well-fed, and supported in stable and nurturing relationships. Head

Start is already a model program, but we can enhance its quality even more.

The bill strengthens literacy efforts currently underway in Head Start programs. We know the key to future reading success is to get young children excited about letters and books and numbers. The bill emphasizes language and literacy, by enhancing the literacy training required of Head Start teachers, continuing to promote parent literacy, and working to put more books into Head Start classrooms and into children's homes.

In addition, we make a commitment in the bill to upgrade all of the educational components of Head Start, and ensure that the services are aligned with expectations for children's kindergarten year and continue to be driven by the effective Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.

At the heart of Head Start's success are its teachers and staff. They are caring, committed leaders who know the children they serve and are dedicated to improving their lives. They help children learn to identify letters of the alphabet and arrange the pieces of puzzles. They teach them to brush their teeth, wash their hands, make friends and follow rules. Yet their salary is only half the salary of kindergarten teachers, and the turnover is high, about 11 percent a year.

Because teacher quality is directly related to a child's outcome, our bill establishes a goal to ensure that every Head Start teacher earns an A.A. degree, and that half earn their B.A. degree by the next time Congress revisits the program. Head Start teachers and staff are the greatest resource for children and families in the program, and investing in their development must be a priority. I look forward to working with my colleagues to match these ambitious goals with the funding needed to make them a reality.

Our legislation also gives local Head Start programs greater authority to assess the needs of families in their communities and define the services necessary to meet those needs. We've lifted the eligibility requirements under the program, so that families living below 130 percent of the Federal poverty rate can qualify and participate in Head Start. Yet we still prioritize services to children who need them the most. If programs determine that a greater share of infants and toddlers need services, our bill allows them to apply to the Secretary to convert and expand services to our youngest children. If programs identify a need to provide full-day or full-year care for children and families, they can take steps to do this as well.

Accountability is a cornerstone of excellence in education and should start early. Head Start should be accountable for its commitment to provide safe and healthy learning environments, to support each child's individual pattern of development and learning, to cement community partnerships in services for children, and to involve parents in their child's growth.

Head Start reviews are already among the most extensive in the field. Our bill takes a further step to improve this process by ensuring that monitoring results and feedback are available to programs and used for their improvement. We also take steps to address programs with serious deficiencies, and ensure that substantial problems in programs do not languish at the expense of children. If a local program is unable to meet Head Start's high standards of quality, others should step in. Every Head Start child deserves to develop and learn in a high-quality program.

Our bill also takes an important step to suspend the Head Start National Reporting System. Four years ago, many of us insisted that instead of rushing forward with a national test of hundreds of thousands of children, Head Start would be better served if plans were developed more deliberately to ensure an appropriate means to gather and report child outcomes in programs. That appeal was ignored, and the Administration proceeded with an assessment—without sufficient authorization or oversight from Congress—that was later proven flawed and inconsistent with professional standards for testing and measurement.

This legislation requires that the assessments used in Head Start must be held to the highest standard. Head Start's measures must be valid and reliable, fair to children from all backgrounds, balanced in what they assess, and sufficient to reflect the development of the whole child. We've called on the National Academy of Sciences to survey and study the state of assessments and outcomes appropriate for young children in environments like Head Start. Their study will be of great value as we consider how best to move forward in Head Start and other early childhood settings.

Finally, the bill maintains the essential Federal-to-local structure of Head Start, and rejects other proposals that would dilute this important focus. Head Start's design enables it to tailor its services to meet local community needs. Head Start's regulations guarantee a universal standard of quality across all programs. Yet each program is unique and specifically adapted to its children and families. The focus on local neighborhoods and their children must always be at the heart of Head Start.

One of our highest priorities in Congress is to expand educational opportunities for every American. In this age of globalization, every citizen deserves a chance to acquire the educational skills needed to compete in the modern economy. This process starts early—it begins at birth and continues throughout the early years, long before children enter kindergarten.

The Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 will keep Head Start on its successful path, and enable this vital program to continue to thrive and improve. I look forward to swift passage

of this legislation in the Senate, and a productive Conference with the House on the important reforms in this bill.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I am delighted to join my colleagues in supporting the Head Start for School Readiness Act, which reauthorizes this critically important program to help prepare our most disadvantaged young children to attend school. We have worked hard to bring this bipartisan bill to the floor, and I particularly thank Senators KENNEDY, ENZI, and ALEXANDER for their leadership on this issue.

For more than 40 years, Head Start provided comprehensive early childhood development services to low-income children, creating an important bridge to kindergarten and beyond.

Head Start addresses the comprehensive needs of children and their families by offering not only academic opportunities, but also supports for health, nutrition, social skills, and more. More than 900,000 children across the Nation, including nearly 9,000 children in Connecticut, depend on Head Start to support their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Head Start is the foundation for a lifetime of learning for many of our most vulnerable children, and this reauthorization provides for continued success, while also strengthening the program.

Among the many improvements in this legislation, of great importance is the expanded access to Head Start for more disadvantaged children. In Connecticut and other States where the cost of living is particularly high, many poor families aren't able to enroll their children in Head Start because they earn incomes just above the poverty level. This reauthorization allows programs to serve families with incomes up to 130 percent of the Federal poverty level, and expands opportunities for children of migrant families, Indian children, homeless children, foster children, as well as additional infants and toddler in Early Head Start programs.

Currently, only half of all eligible children are served in Head Start, and fewer than 5 percent are served in Early Head Start. Head Start programs are also facing tremendous increases in operating costs, including transportation, health care premiums, facilities maintenance, and training for staff; yet Head Start has essentially been flatfunded for years. This legislation authorizes an increase from \$6.9 billion in the current fiscal year to \$7.3 billion in fiscal year 2008, \$7.5 billion in fiscal year 2009, and \$7.9 billion in fiscal year 2010, which will begin to meet the needs of Head Start children and allow for more enrollment opportunities. However, we must also acknowledge that we still have far to go before we provide adequate resources to this invaluable program.

We know that children struggle when their families are not involved in their education; and that parents play the most important role in ensuring the success of their children. This legislation encourages a high level of family involvement, maintains the integral participation of parents in the day-to-day operations of the programs, and offers family members key roles as decisionmakers.

I am pleased that this bill also improves program accountability by further clarifying governance responsibilities and enhancing teacher quality expectations. While we establish goals for improving educational standards for staff, we acknowledge that current resources may not adequately support staff to pursue additional training, nor provide enough for increased wages; therefore, we do not make these standards mandatory.

Head Start must continue to maintain a core and integral role in our broader early childhood care and education systems as we expand our efforts to improve early education across this country. The legislation encourages greater collaboration and coordination with other early childhood development programs.

Passing the Head Start for School Readiness Act today is an important step forward to improve opportunities for low-income children. Nothing reduces poverty like learning, and Head Start gives children what they need to learn early. I look forward to working with my colleagues to see that this important legislation becomes law.●

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I would like to inquire of Chairman KENNEDY regarding the State advisory councils on early childhood education and care included in S. 556, the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, S. 556 affirms the active role that States have in coordinating their system of early childhood education programs, and encourages States to enhance that role to increase the quality of programs available to young children. The act designates an early care and education council in each State for the purposes of conducting an inventory of children's needs and exploring the availability of prekindergarten opportunities; exploring areas for collaboration and coordination across programs; developing plans for data collection and to support the professional development of early childhood educators; and providing for the review and upgrading of State early learning standards. For those States prepared and interested in moving forward with a statewide plan encompassing these activities, S. 556 provides for one-time incentive grants to further develop and implement these important efforts.

S. 556 also permit States to designate an existing entity to serve as the State advisory council on early childhood education and care, if such entity includes representation consistent with members mentioned in the act.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the chairman for his explanation of these provisions. I am concerned, however, that it may not be practical for States with existing advisory councils to reconfigure their membership to reflect all of the individuals mentioned in the Head Start bill. In my home State of Washington, we are leading the way on early childhood coordination and reform with the establishment in 2005 of Governor Gregoire's cabinet-level Department of Early Learning and the Early Learning Council, which became the Early Learning Advisory Council. The council is working hard to make sure early learning programs in my State are aligned and are providing high quality services. However, I want to make sure that the council is not unduly burdened for being a leader, and that it will not have to reconstitute its membership. I ask the chairman for his commitment to work with me as this bill is considered in conference with the House, to further resolve this issue.

Mr. KENNEDY. I agree and would be happy to work with you on this issue. S. 556 directs Governors to designate specific individuals as members of the State advisory council to the maximum extent possible. While some members may need to be added by States to their existing councils in order to meet the goals of this legislation, I agree fully that Governors will need some flexibility in this function. Therefore, I support grant additional discretion as they consider the makeup and function of their existing councils in relation to the roles and responsibilities under this Act.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I share Senator MURRAY's concerns and appreciate the commitment to working with us on this issue.

S. 556 also includes specific responsibilities of the State advisory council regarding early childhood activities, professional development and opportunities for coordination and collaboration. My State of Connecticut has been a leader in promoting the coordination and improvement of early learning opportunities for young children and has successfully carried out activities that complement the responsibilities under this act. Connecticut's Early Childhood Education Cabinet, which includes many of the members required by the Head Start Act, already advises the State on policy and on initiatives to meet early childhood goals, conducts statewide evaluations of the school readiness programs, and promotes collaboration and consistency of quality services.

Is it the intention that States would be required to abandon the progress made with their existing efforts and begin new initiatives to fulfill their responsibilities under S. 556?

Mr. KENNEDY. I appreciate the Senator's inquiry on this important point. That is not my intention, and S. 556 does not stipulate any requirements for States to conduct new efforts concerning their assessment of children's

needs, opportunities for collaboration and coordination, the establishment of a unified data system, professional development activities, or other efforts described under the responsibilities of the State Advisory Council in this legislation. My own State of Massachusetts has also been a leader in carrying out several of these efforts through our own State Department of Early Care and Education.

Preexisting and current efforts in States to improve and enhance the quality of early childhood education programs would certainly help fulfill and count toward the responsibilities stipulated by the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

I ask Senator ENZI if he agrees with this point.

Mr. ENZI. I do agree with the chairman and would be happy to join him, Senator DODD, and Senator MURRAY in further clarifying these points as the conference committee considers S. 556 and begins its work on the reauthorization of the Head Start Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank my colleagues for their work with me on these issues, and I commend them for their leadership on the important reforms in this bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist upon its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate; and that the HELP Committee be appointed as conferees, with the above occurring without further intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 1714) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER appointed Senators KENNEDY, DODD, HARKIN, MIKULSKI, BINGAMAN, MURRAY, REED, CLINTON, OBAMA, SANDERS, BROWN, ENZI, GREGG, ALEXANDER, BURR, ISAKSON, MURKOWSKI, HATCH, ROBERTS, ALLARD, and COBURN conferees on the part of the Senate.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2007

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 20; that on Wednesday, following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved