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REAUTHORIZING HEAD START: PREPARING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING PROPOSED LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING FUNDS FOR HEAD START, FOCUSING ON PROGRAMS TO PREPARE CHILDREN TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE

JULY 22, 2003

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REAUTHORIZING HEAD START: PREPARING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE

TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 o'clock a.m., in room SD–430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Gregg (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Gregg, Alexander, Warner, Kennedy, Dodd, Harkin, Mikulski, Jeffords, Murray, Reed, and Clinton.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR GREGG

The CHAIRMAN. It is 10 o'clock, so we are going to begin. I understand Senator Kennedy is headed in this direction, and when he gets here, we will proceed with his statement. But I wanted to get my statement in and then get started on the hearing.

Today we are going to be talking about Head Start, which is a program that has had considerable success over the years, and I think we can take great pride in it, really, as a Federal Government initiative to try to get kids, preschool children, into an atmosphere which is nurturing and healthy.

It was begun in 1975 as part of the War on Poverty. It has a $7 billion budget, and it supports about 900,000 children who are of extreme low income in most instances.

Its strength in my opinion is that it has been community-based, that it has always involved significant community participation, and that it has been focused on making sure that the children who come into the program, many of whom come from difficult family situations, get a healthy environment and a decent meal or two through the day and are given some ideas on how to get along with other kids and, hopefully, ideas on how to deal with life and move on and get ready for school.

There has been considerable discussion about its reauthorization. Obviously, the House has already produced a bill. I believe very strongly that there needs to be a building upon what is I think a very strong foundation in the program, and that building should be focused primarily on a more aggressive approach in the area of academic achievement, giving these kids a better chance at succeeding when they get to the first grade by first off giving them some of the tools they will need to be competitive with their peers who are coming from other experiences into the first grade or into kinder-

garten and giving them stronger language skills, stronger skills in the area of basic knowledge of the alphabet and hopefully some phonics and basic numerology.

In addition, in strengthening the academic component, I think we also need to look at some accountability to make sure that we have Head Start programs that are actually accomplishing what we desire them to accomplish, and we also need to align the programs with the elementary schools that they feed into so that both the leaders of the Head Start community within the Head Start Program and the folks who are going to get these children as they move forward into kindergarten and first grade will have a sense that they are all talking off the same script.

Those are my priorities as we move forward in this reauthorization. I do not wish to reinvent the wheel. I think we have basically a very strong product to work from in the present Head Start Program, but I think there are ways to make it a better program for the children who are participating in it, and I intend to work toward accomplishing that as we go through reauthorization.

We are joined today by five witnesses who are going to formally testify. Windy Hill has been the associate commissioner of the Head Start Bureau since January of last year. Prior to joining the Bureau, Ms. Hill served as executive director of Centex Family Services in Texas, which administered nine Head Start centers in four counties.

Dr. Reid Lyon is a research psychologist and chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch within the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at NIH. Dr. Lyon received a Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico, and prior to coming to NIH, Dr. Lyon taught children with learning disabilities.

We also have Marnie Shaul, who is the director of education issues at the General Accounting Office. She is responsible for the studies that GAO undertakes for Congress on early childhood programs and elementary and secondary school education. Ms. Shaul has had a variety of career activities including research, teaching, and public policy.

Amy Wilkins is executive director of Trust for Early Education which was established in 2002 to provide a strong and effective voice in support of high-quality voluntary preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds. Prior to working with the Education Trust, Ms. Wilkins worked at the Child Defense Center, and she also served in the media.

I believe Senator Kennedy will introduce Ms. Santos, who is from Holyoke, I believe, which is a great town; I have spent many days in Holyoke.

And Dr. Whitehurst, who is head of OERI, which does research in the area of education, is here to answer questions as well.

Senator Kennedy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for having this hearing and for recognizing the importance of taking action on this legislation. We are looking forward to working with you.

Today's hearing gives us the opportunity to discuss the achievements of Head Start and the ideas that will be considered for its

reauthorization. For 38 years, Head Start has been a helping hand for our Nation's neediest families and children. Head Start today gives nearly one million young children the support they need to begin school ready to learn. It guarantees that children see doctors and dentists and are immunized against childhood diseases. It teaches children to eat healthy meals. It welcomes parents into its classrooms and urges them to participate actively in the administration of its local programs.

Three decades of solid research show that Head Start works. Children who participate in the program may gain some vocabulary, become more interested in books, and learn to get along better with one another. Children from the same background who do not participate in Head Start do not make these gains.

But the need by children across the country for these services is miles from being met. Because of inadequate funding, 40 percent of those eligible still have no Head Start. In the case of Early Head Start, which serves children ages zero to 3, the figure is a shameful 97 percent. Ninety-seven percent of children eligible for Early Head Start have no access to it.

The President's budget for next year recommends only enough funding to cover inflation; it has no funding to serve any additional children. That is wrong. Full funding of Head Start should be a high priority for Congress and the Nation. Putting Head Start on the path to full funding would require an additional $1 billion for the coming year compared to the $148 million the administration proposes.

Obviously, money is not the only answer. But it is a large part of it. New resources should come with proven effective reforms that will genuinely improve Head Start, not undermine it. I am confident we can build on Head Start's record of success by making several key improvements.

Better coordination with State and local programs makes sense. We can align Head Start with early learning standards in the States, facilitate coordination between Head Start and local elementary schools, and provide better training and support for Head Start staff and for those working in early education programs as well. This kind of coordination should be our goal in all 50 States.

We should continue Head Start's focus on the whole child and strengthen its focus in the area of school readiness. Head Start needs strong educational standards that emphasize language and literacy, expanded vocabulary, and pre-math skills.

The key point here is that even if children are excited about books and know some letters of the alphabet and can recognize some numbers, they are not ready for school unless they can also follow a teacher's directions and cooperate with the child in the next seat or across the aisle. The development of a child's pre-literacy and pre-math skills is important, and so is the development of their social and emotional skills. Children need and deserve support in each of these areas.

We also need to increase our investment in teachers in Head Start classrooms. Head Start children need the best possible instruction to succeed, and Head Start teachers and staff need to know the families and the children they serve.

In 1998, we set a goal for the program to ensure that half of all teachers earn an associate degree by 2003. Head Start has met that goal. In fact, Head Start can be a model for career development. We should work toward the goal of a Head Start teacher with a bachelor's degree in every classroom, and we should pay those teachers a fair wage—give them the ongoing support to keep them in the program.

We should also strengthen the accountability in Head Start. Head Start reviews are already among the most extensive in the field. All Head Start programs should use the data from these reviews to improve their programs and enhance the role of annual evaluations.

I support the development of a high-quality assessment for Head Start children. But any assessment of 4-year-olds needs to be very carefully prepared. It has to be valid and reliable and balanced in what it measures—not just reading and math skills but social and emotional skills as well. It must be fair, culturally appropriate, and recognize the needs of children whose first language is not English.

Above all, though, we cannot afford to undermine the very reforms we are trying to achieve. State block grants are not reform. A block grant for Head Start would mean no guarantee of services for the neediest children; no guarantee of medical checkups, dental visits, and screenings for hearing and vision; no guarantee of support for parents. It would mean lower quality and lower standards, and it would jeopardize the time that children spend learning.

I oppose any effort to block-grant Head Start—not in 50 States, not even in one State. Why take a chance on any block grant that would leave any young child behind?

We know that we can strengthen Head Start and do it in ways that do not weaken it. We are fortunate to have witnesses today who will share their expertise and insights on strengthening Head Start.

Thank you all for joining us this morning. We are looking forward to hearing from each of you.

I appreciate the courtesy of the chair in letting me introduce Janis Santos. Ms. Santos has served as executive director of the Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start Center since 1979 and is currently on the National Head Start Association Board of Directors.

Janis began her teaching career by opening up the first early childhood center in Ludlow, MA, in 1973 under the Head Start Program. Under her leadership, the Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start Center has grown to be the second-largest Head Start Center in Massachusetts and the largest provider of early education in Western Massachusetts.

Janis has received numerous awards for community service distinction and nonprofit operational excellence. She has been a consistent and strong voice for Head Start programs both in Massachusetts and nationwide, having served as chairperson of the Massachusetts Head Start Directors Association, chairperson of the New England Head Start Association, and a member of the National Advisory Panel for Head Start 2010.

Janis is a Massachusetts native, and I am particularly proud to welcome her today. She is a good friend and counselor and advisor. I do not make a move without listening to Janis.

Janis, we are glad to have you here.

The CHAIRMAN. Janis, we need you. In a couple days, I would like to call you and ask you to make some suggestions to Senator Kennedy; there are some moves I want him to make. [Laughter.]

Before we begin I have statements from Senators Enzi and Ensign.

[The prepared statements of Senators Enzi and Ensign follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Mr. Chairman, I want to express my thanks to the individuals who will testify about the important issue of early childhood education and the reauthorization of the Head Start program. As a father and soon-to-be grandfather, I am very interested in early childhood development and believe it is one of the most important issues to come under this Committee's jurisdiction.

When the Head Start program was developed over 35 years ago, it was built on the promise that the Federal Government would take a role in helping disadvantaged children overcome the developmental obstacles associated with poverty. Where these children lacked family support necessary to succeed in life, Head Start would provide a safe environment where they could learn and grow. In addition to educating the children, the program would also take on an important role in educating families and providing essential services to children, like nutrition and hygiene assistance, in order to give these children the best start possible.

Head Start is now one of the largest Federal initiatives to focus on children under five, reaching hundreds of thousands of children nationwide, in thousands of centers, with an army of teachers and support staff. More than half of the program's teachers have earned degrees in early childhood education or a related field. In Wyoming, there are almost 2,000 children enrolled in Head Start programs in more than 100 classes, including the tribal Head Start centers. Each class is staffed by a teacher who cares deeply about the development of the children in his or her classroom, as well as the ability of the child's family to provide a safe and stable home.

Despite the investment in the program over its nearly 40-year history, a significant question has been raised about the effectiveness of Head Start. Study after study has documented how children who enter a Head Start program are better off when they leave. That information is encouraging and is appropriately brought up in this hearing, but a troubling statistic that has accompanied many of these studies is that children leaving Head Start continue to lag behind their peers who come from more advantageous circumstances.

According to information released by the Department of Health and Human Services in their Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), most children in Head Start couldn't identify 10 letters, a requirement in the last reauthorization of this program. In fact, many of the children couldn't identify any letters at all. Across the board, children leaving Head Start programs fell below the national

average in vocabulary, letter recognition, early reading and early mathematics.

To me, this sends a clear signal that the Federal Government needs to ensure the program promotes learning in the same way it does the health and well being of these children. In essence, the Head Start program has focused so much on promoting a stable learning environment that the learning has been overlooked. Based on this information, it seems unnecessary for the Federal Government to require all Head Start teachers to attend a post-secondary institution and earn a degree in early childhood learning if the program itself isn't designed with an appropriate focus on the children's cognitive development.

According to a joint study published recently by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine entitled Neurons to Neighborhoods, the most important years in terms of cognitive development are the earliest. I believe we must work to ensure that the Head Start program emphasizes an appropriate learning environment, not only by providing health and social services for children, but also by challenging them to learn and develop in a way that will put them on a level field with their peers from more fortunate circumstances. I believe this is consistent with the goals that guided the development of Head Start over 30 years ago.

Part of the discussion on early learning should be how Head Start might better prepare students for elementary school by strengthening the program's performance standards. Many of the students leaving Head Start are better off than when they entered, and that is important, but I feel it is important to ask the question of whether or not Head Start students are doing as well as they could be. If the Head Start program can be revised to include stronger, reachable academic goals, that needs to be a part of the discussion. We owe it to the children participating in this program to design it in a way that they can start school on level footing with their peers.

I also believe the discussion should include the issue of collaboration between Head Start and similar programs operating at the State level. Many States are running preschool programs, including Wyoming. It makes sense to get the staff and administrators from the different programs talking to each other to make sure the children in these programs are getting the best material and curricula available, so children in several different types of programs can improve simultaneously.

The Senate has an important role to play in helping to improve Head Start so it can provide better support for the dedicated men and women who make the program function from day to day, so Head Start children can succeed just as well as their peers. I believe we need to explore potential program changes to see where we might build on Head Start's successes and address any shortcomings. I am convinced that an increased emphasis on early education, combined with Head Start's success in providing a safe and stable learning environment can serve as the successful foundation for thousands of American children participating in the program.

With these questions in mind, I am grateful to the experts appearing here today who have brought their collective experience to share with the Committee. I am confident that this hearing will be

the starting point for a valuable discussion of how the Senate might address potential changes to the Head Start program, as we paint a vivid picture of how well the program is doing to help disadvantaged children reach their potential.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENSIGN

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that this committee is moving forward with the reauthorization of the Head Start program. As a new member of this committee, I am looking forward to playing an active role in this process.

While the Head Start program has been successful for many of the children and families who have enrolled. However, I believe that the program can do better.

The Head Start program should continue to promote the well-being of the whole child. However, that should not be incompatible with an effort to focus more on early literacy skills. This program needs to ensure that all children leaving Head Start programs are entering kindergarten at a skill level equal to their peers. That is not happening right now. While I agree that many of these children are entering kindergarten at a higher level than they would have without the assistance of the Head Start program, these students are still not at a level comparable to other children their age. It would be a disservice to Head Start kids to ignore this disparity. It would be a disservice to conduct business as usual while Head Start kids are being left behind.

I was looking forward to the results from the completion of the first national-level research study on this program and was disappointed to learn that the Department of Health and Human Services has delayed the completion of this study until 2006. This research would have provided us, as policy makers, with the first comprehensive nationwide study of this important program and the impact it has had on the children and families it serves. Every witness testifying today will point to research regarding the effectiveness of the Head Start program, none of which I am denying as untrue or invalid, but it would have been very useful to have a fully comprehensive study as we consider the reauthorization of this program.

It is my hope that we can work on this committee to improve the coordination at the local level between Head Start programs and early childhood and childcare programs. Currently there is no mechanism in place for local Head Start grantees to coordinate the services they provide with those provided by State and local early education providers. This coordination is necessary to ensure that we are not duplicating services, and, more importantly, that children and families who need some extra help are getting the services they deserve.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that I do believe that this program can do better for both the children and families that it serves, and I believe that many of those improvements can be made by this committee.

The CHAIRMAN. We will begin the testimony, then, with Ms. Hill.

STATEMENTS OF WINDY M. HILL, ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER, HEAD START BUREAU, ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; G. REID LYON, CHIEF, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR BRANCH, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, ACCOMPANIED BY RUSS WHITEHURST, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES; MARNIE S. SHAUL, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, WORKFORCE AND INCOME SECURITY ISSUES, U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, WASHINGTON, DC; AMY WILKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TRUST FOR EARLY EDUCATION, WASHINGTON, DC; AND JANIS SANTOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOLYOKE-CHICOPEE-SPRINGFIELD HEAD START CENTER, SPRINGFIELD, MA

Ms. HILL. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. As associate commissioner of Head Start and also as a former Head Start child and mother of a Head Start child, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the President's plan to strengthen Head Start.

The House took a major step toward ensuring that Head Start children have the skills they need to succeed in school by marking up the School Readiness Act of 2003. We look forward to building on the momentum created by the House bill and your hearing today to move the Head Start reauthorization forward in the coming weeks.

Head Start was launched in 1965 as part of a bold "big idea" that no child should be limited in his or her education because of the circumstances of their family. None of us should be satisfied until we have achieved the vision reflected in the "big idea" that is synonymous with Head Start—that economically disadvantaged children should arrive at school on a more level playing field with economically advantaged peers—a challenge for us to do even better.

The Head Start Program has triggered changes in early care and education across the country. More than 40 States and the District of Columbia now have early childhood programs of their own. Numerous States are revising their standards for child care and preschool programs, and as research has demonstrated the importance of providing comprehensive services, States are now involved in trying to integrate a multitude of other programs aimed at young children and their families.

Federal and State Governments currently spend more than $23 billion each year for child care and preschool education, and much more when you consider the other State health, nutrition, and welfare-related programs that serve the same children and families.

At the same time, however, although Head Start children make progress in areas of school readiness during the Head Start year, they continue to lag behind their more economically advantaged peers on a number of important measures of early literacy and math skills at kindergarten entry.

In addition, we are seeing an alarming lack of coordination between Head Start and State-administered programs that is undermining our ability to provide high-quality preschool services to as many children as possible. President Bush is asking Congress to in-

clude a provision in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act to allow interested States to integrate Head Start in their overall plans for preschool services.

Under both the President's proposal and in the House bill, States could offer the opportunity to coordinate their preschool programs and child care programs with Head Start in exchange for meeting certain accountability. States eligible to participate must submit a State plan for approval to the Secretary of Health and Human Services that addresses several fundamental issues. Each State must indicate in its plan how it would better coordinate Head Start with State-administered preschool programs.

In addition, the State plan must address how it will work to develop goals for all preschool children in the State and devise an accountability system to determine whether children are achieving the goals.

States must describe in their plan how they will maintain the comprehensive array of child development services for children supported by Head Start funds and guarantee that they will continue to provide at least as much financial support for State preschool programs and Head Start as they are currently providing.

The President's proposal, and now the School Readiness Act, share characteristics that are frequently misunderstood that I would like to clarify.

First, neither the President nor the House is proposing to block grant Head Start funding to States.

Second, States taking advantage of this option must make a commitment to maintain the comprehensive services currently available to Head Start children under the State plan as supported with Head Start funds.

And third, States who choose this option and who have their plans approved will still be accountable to the Federal Government for their use of Head Start funds and for achieving positive outcomes for children.

The President's plan and the School Readiness Act will not allow States to supplant State preschool or any other State funds with Head Start dollars. Neither would a State be eligible of they reduced their State spending levels on early childhood programs.

One of the reasons why the Head Start Program has remained strong is that it adapts to accommodate the changing needs of children and families. Most important, we cannot afford to have children slip through the cracks that nonsystematic approaches create. Our children and families deserve the best programs that we can provide and that communities and States can support.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Hill.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hill may be found in additional material.]

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Lyon.

Mr. LYON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Kennedy, for the opportunity to come before you and talk to you about the research that we have done at NIH, at the NICHD, with respect to child development and how that interfaces with Head Start and other early childhood programs.

To my left is Dr. Russ Whitehurst, director of the Institute for Educational Sciences, who not only holds a role in coordinating research nationally on this same topic but himself is a national expert in early childhood education and the study of such.

Over the past 15 years, we have learned that our preschool children can acquire a great deal of information about language, reading, and cognitive skills, more than we originally thought. We know that preschool kids from disadvantaged environments are significantly behind their more affluent age-mates in linguistic skills essential for later reading and language development.

Our research tells us that this is because youngsters growing up in low-income environments engage in significantly fewer literacy interactions, such as shared book-reading and language interaction, such as child-adult discussions.

As Hart and Risley pointed out in their NICHD-supported research with professional working class and welfare families, the average child on welfare was having half as much experience listening and speaking to parents—about 616 words per hour—as the average working child—1,251 words per hour—and much less, obviously, only one-third of the average professional family youngster who is receiving 2,153 words per hour.

What does this mean? It means that our preschool programs must provide children from low-income families with systematic and evidence-based interactions to close these gaps. In many ways, a comprehensive preschool program designed to help children develop the necessary cognitive, language, early reading, social and emotional competencies is their last hope to eventually succeed in school.

In the next decade, if the American early care and education system does not change, millions more children will never realize their potential.

What makes this issue so compelling and troublesome is that it does not have to be this way. We do know a great deal about the foundational preschool abilities that predict success or failure in reading in the early grades, and we are making substantial progress in identifying the characteristics of high-quality preschool programs that are able to help 3-and 4-year-old children acquire these critical abilities.

We do know that the development of oral language abilities—what I mean by that is vocabulary and an understanding of grammar, the development of phonological awareness—and what I mean by that is the understanding that words are structured in smaller bits, either syllables or sounds—and the development of print knowledge, that is, knowing your letters and letter sounds and so on—development of these capabilities during the preschool years is absolutely essential for their development of later language and literacy skills—absolutely essential.

These critical language and cognitive abilities can be developed, by the way, in warm, nurturing environments that can also enhance the development of emotional health and social competency, as both the chairman and Senator Kennedy pointed out.

Our research tells us that if preschool children are not taught and do not learn these concepts and skills, they will not be ready for school. Unfortunately, our research also indicates that Head

Start as traditionally structured and implemented is not fully achieving its stated purpose of promoting school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children.

Our studies continue to point to the fact that low-income youngsters from Head Start programs perform significantly below their more advantaged peers in language, reading and mathematics once they enter school. This gap places a tremendously unfair burden on the youngsters so that from the very first day of kindergarten, they are already behind. This is unfortunate, because with proper preschool instruction, many can enter school on an equal footing with every other child.

As Dr. Zigler stated in 1996, "Head Start's goal is and always was to prepare children for school." Over the past three decades, it was thought that ensuring adequate nutrition, healthy bodies, emotional health, and social competencies would lead to robust learning in schools. To be sure, and there is no doubt—physical health, adequate nutrition, parental involvement, family social services, and interactions to develop emotional health and social competencies are necessary to achieve this goal. But indeed they are not sufficient.

Social and emotional competence do not guarantee school readiness and academic achievement. Children must also come to kindergarten and first grade with strong foundational knowledge of language, reading, mathematics, and science concepts essential for success.

The goods news is that high-quality early childhood education programs can enable preschoolers to develop these fundamental language and cognitive concepts. The bad news is that far too many children are spending time in preschool settings, including many Head Start classrooms, that do not meet a child's essential learning and cognitive needs and thus neglect a very important aspect of child development.

If Head Start classrooms are to prepare children for entry to and success in school, our research tells us that they must foster language and emergent literacy skills. If we do not, they will fail in school. If they fail to read and fail in school, we will most likely condemn them to a life of continued disadvantage.

We would like to put forth several recommendations for the committee to consider.

No. 1, it is critical that early childhood programs including Head Start provide a genuinely comprehensive set of activities and educational opportunities to all children, including those with disabilities, that are grounded in developmental science. It is imperative that children's social, emotional and cognitive growth be fostered on the basis of what developmental science tells us about what preschool children can learn, what they need to learn to succeed in school, and how learning is most optimally supported. For too long, our understanding, development, and implementation of preschool programs have been based on philosophical beliefs, untested assumptions, or out-of-date science.

Second, we must develop and implement a comprehensive assessment and reporting system to ensure that Head Start programs produce the positive outcomes that we know are achievable.

This reporting system will, for the first time ever in the history of Head Start, provide outcome data on all Head Start programs and children, with and without disabilities, and thus help to identify areas in need of continued improvement as well as to document systematically the successes derived by Head Start programs.

We owe it to the parents of Head Start to assess their children's progress on a regular basis in ways that will help guide the instruction and support of Head Start children.

And by the way, our data clearly tell us that youngsters are not stressed or frightened by the assessment. They typically have fun in a one-to-one interaction with an adult who is allowing them to demonstrate their skills and mastery as long as that adult understands how to gain rapport with the youngster and capture the youngster's attention throughout the assessment process.

No. 3, we must ensure that our youngest children are learning from teachers who are highly competent in their ability to help children develop social competencies, emotional health, and the cognitive language, literacy, and mathematics concepts critical to school success.

Numerous studies have shown that program quality and the benefits to children with and without disabilities are inextricably linked with staff educational background and training. The significant benefits to children provided by the Chicago CPC program and the CIRCLE program described in my full testimony underscore this point.

All preschool teachers, for example, in the CPC program had college degrees and certification in early childhood. While the teachers in the CIRCLE program ranged in education from high school degree through graduate degree, the systematic mentoring, training, and follow-up training produced many teachers of high quality. And by the way, that training was the professional development that Commissioner Hill provided to most Head Start teachers who signed up for that particular program.

No. 4, it is essential that preschool programs be coordinated with other programs providing early care and education as well as with the curriculum framework and goals of kindergarten and early public school programs.

Moreover, greater coordination and collaboration are needed between State and Federal programs to ensure that all children entering kindergarten are ready to learn. The value of a highly-coordinated series of programmatic interactions from age 3 through the early grade school years can be seen in the results, for example, produced by the Chicago CPC program. The fact that the CPC program that is provided through the Chicago public schools provides a continuity in children's learning environments as well as appropriate levels of compensation for teachers and staff. Other communities, as noted in the Strengthening Head Start Report, which I would like to enter into the record, provide good examples of programs located outside the school system that are also able to provide seamless services.

Finally, while many Head Start programs need to be strengthened to ensure high-quality interactions to support and develop physical, social, emotional and cognitive strengths in an integrated and accountable fashion, it is clear that many States do not have

such high-quality programs in place. It will be critical to identify these programs that are beacons of light and expand and build on them with both local and State funding. It will also be critical to identify low-performing programs and provide the necessary technical assistance to strengthen them—but in the end, to ensure that the health and development of our children are the priorities, not the continuation of ineffective programs.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Lyon.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lyon may be found in additional material.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Shaul.

Ms. SHAUL. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss GAO's work on Head Start. Head Start is nearly 40 years old and since its beginning has served about 21 million children at a total cost of about $66 billion.

Head Start is a popular program, enjoying bipartisan support, and many believe it to be one of the most successful social programs.

Head Start's reauthorization provides an opportunity to consider two major issues that my statement addresses—how Head Start fits into today's environment of early childhood programs, and what is known about the effectiveness of Head Start.

My message today is that Head Start is one of a variety of programs for young children, so coordination is important. And my second message is that little is known about the effectiveness of the Head Start Program.

Since Head Start's establishment in 1965, the early childhood environment has changed greatly to meet the needs of a changing society. Head Start is no longer the only major provider of services for children from low-income families. It now operates alongside other early childhood education and care programs funded by Federal, State, and local governments.

This array of programs has been created in part to address the increased number of low-income working mothers. Working families often need full-day services, but some Federal programs such as Head Start are mainly part-day services. So full-day care requires coordination. However, it may be challenging for programs to coordinate because of different income eligibility requirements, different geographic locations, and different program standards.

Although there is a substantial body of research on Head Start that describes the program and its participants, little is known about the effectiveness of the program on children's progress. HHS currently has studies showing that the skills of children who participate in Head Start do improve. However, these studies cannot provide definitive evidence that the improvement in children's skills is because they participated in Head Start.

HHS has a study underway that will provide more definitive information on Head Start's effectiveness, but according to HHS, the results will not be available until 2006.

I would like to briefly elaborate on these two points. First, funded at over $6 billion, Head Start is the largest recipient of Federal funds for early education and care. Two other major programs funded through HHS provide funds for child care—the Child Care

and Development Fund and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, otherwise known as CCDF and TANF.

The Department of Education also has programs like Even Start and Title I that provide services for children under 5. In addition to Federal programs, State and local governments provide services for children of low-income families. For example, the majority of States fund preschool programs, and some supplement Head Start programs.

As the number of working parents has increased, so has the need for full-time care. Congress mandated that Federal programs coordinate with one another to provide greater access for children of low-income families, and some progress has been made. For example, Head Start programs are required to coordinate with programs such as CCDF, and some programs report sharing staff or sharing space.

Although there are some successes, gaps in care remain. Barriers such as difference in program standards, different geographic locations for local programs, and differing eligibility requirements hinder coordination. For example, Head Start's income eligibility standard requires that 90 percent of the children come from families at or below the Federal poverty level or eligible for public assistance, whereas CCDF funds may be used to fund families with higher incomes.

Turning to my second point, although there is an extensive body of research that describes the program, there is no definitive national-level research about the effectiveness of Head Start for the programs and families it serves.

In 1998, GAO testified about this lack of evidence, and during the last reauthorization of Head Start, the Congress required that HHS undertake an impact study with the completion date of 2003. The Congress was specific in requiring that this study use rigorous research methods.

Conducting impact evaluations is difficult and often expensive, but the size and the significance of the Head Start Program indicates that knowing about its effectiveness is important.

The impact study now underway addresses two questions—how Head Start affects the school readiness of children, and under what circumstances does Head Start work best and for what types of children.

The study is using a rigorous methodology that many researchers consider to be the best way to determine a program's effect—an experimental design whereby children are randomly assigned to the Head Start Program or to a control group that does not receive Head Start services. By comparing outcomes for these two groups, one can show the effective of the Head Start program rather than the effect of other developmental influences on children.

This national impact study is budgeted at about $28 million and will follow children through spring of their first grade. According to HHS, as I said, this study will be completed in 2006.

Head Start is also conducting another study, FACES, which is currently providing Head Start a variety of descriptive information on a national sample of children. Study results describe such things as children's progress, family involvement, and teaching practices. For example, FACES research published in 2003 shows

that children enrolled in Head Start demonstrated progress in early literacy and social skills.

However, FACES does not compare the gains that Head Start children have made to those who have not participated in Head Start, and this lack of a control group limits HHS's ability to determine whether the progress of these children would have been made without the program.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have on my statement or on GAO's ongoing work on Head Start teachers and children's cognitive development.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Shaul.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Shaul may be found in additional material.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Wilkins.

Ms. WILKINS. Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you this morning.

In this reauthorization of Head Start, you will consider a number of issues. I am here today to address just one—narrowing the school readiness gap between Head Start children and more affluent children by ensuring that each Head Start classroom is led by a teacher with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early education.

Head Start has provided millions of our most vulnerable children with a foundation of integrated health, nutrition, academic, and family support services. In doing so, it has already narrowed the gap between these children and other children. Nonetheless, the gap remains.

The effort to further narrow this gap must be focused on the promotion of strong literacy skills. However, as important as it is for Head Start to enhance the intellectual growth of children, it must not do so by cutting back on the other critical services that have provided the foundation of Head Start's success.

Promoting literacy schools should be in addition to—not a replace for—the elements of Head Start that have demonstrable positive impacts on school readiness.

Vocabulary is a critical building block to later literacy. Low-income 3-year-olds have vocabularies that are only about half the size of the vocabularies of 3-year-olds living in our most affluent families. To improve their vocabularies, we must provide Head Start children with highly literate teachers who themselves have rich and robust vocabularies. Data from the National Adult Literacy Survey indicate that adults with only AA degrees are twice as likely to have literacy skills below the competent level as those with B.A. degrees.

Requiring Head Start teachers to have bachelor's degrees rather than just associate degrees will increase the likelihood that children will experience richer, more complex speech and be able to build strong vocabularies needed for later reading success.

The National Child Care Staffing Study found that teachers with more formal education are more sensitive to their children, and that children with more sensitive teachers develop stronger literacy skills and higher language scores.

Well-educated teachers also foster strong positive social and emotional development than do teachers with less formal education. Teachers with more formal education are less harsh, punitive, and critical of their students than are teachers with less formal education, and they are more sensitive and supportive of their students with less formal education.

The most renowned early childhood ps for low-income children—the Perry Preschool Program, the Chicago Child-Parent Center that Reid has already spoken about, and the Abecedarian Program are all staffed by teachers with 4-year degrees. If we hope Head Start will have the same high outcomes for its children, we must staff Head Start with the same caliber of teachers.

Many of the most respected research institutions in the field support increasing the percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees in the Head Start Program.

Staffing preschool programs for low-income children with well-educated teachers is not revolutionary. In fact, many States are ahead of the Federal Government in this area. Half the States with preschool programs already require that all of their teachers have 4-year degrees.

There are some who will say that while it may be desirable to staff Head Start with teachers with 4-year degrees, it is impossible to meet this goal. We would suggest that they consider the recent success of New Jersey. In 1998, the State U.S. Supreme Court in Abbott versus Burke ordered that the State establish preschool programs in the 30 highest-poverty school districts in the State. The Court later required that each of these programs be staffed by a lead teacher with a bachelor's degree.

New Jersey has created and executed a plan that has moved the percentage of bachelor's degree teachers in their preschool programs from 35 percent to 80 percent in less than 4 years.

We strongly urge this committee to require that all Head Start lead teachers have B.A.s as soon as possible. The House action on this issue was significant and laudable. However, we hope the Senate will build on this work by increasing the percentage of teachers with B.A.s in Head Start classrooms and making the resources available to educate, attract and retain those teachers.

The Federal Government should demand higher levels of education from Head Start teachers. However, as they attain higher levels of education, they must be compensated at higher levels. Head Start teachers with B.A.s currently earn only about half of what public school kindergarten teachers earn. Increased educational requirements without improved compensation will lead to high teacher turnover rates, which will undermine every effort to improve outcomes for Head Start children.

We have estimated the cost of providing Head Start teachers with scholarships and other supports needed to earn B.A.s to be about $1 billion. An additional $3 billion over 5 years will allow us to increase the salaries of about 64 percent of Head Start lead teachers to levels comparable to the salaries of kindergarten teachers. This increase would put us on a solid path toward having and keeping well-educated Head Start teachers in every classroom.

But program improvement is more than just about increased investment. It is also a question of coordinated policy. This commit-

tee will undoubtedly spend a great deal of time discussing how Head Start programs can be coordinated with State preschool programs. I am eager to participate in these discussions. But I would remind you that to be successful in this area, we also need to consider coordination between Federal programs as well.

I look forward to continuing the dialogue on bachelor's degrees and Head Start as this committee moves forward to work on the Higher Education Act.

Head Start has been successful for so long because it has evolved and incorporated the best research into its program and practices. The single best way to continue to improve the quality of Head Start is to ensure that every Head Start classroom is led by a teacher with a bachelor's degree in specialized education and early childhood education.

Thank you very much for allowing me to testify.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I appreciate the testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wilkins may be found in additional material.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Santos.

Ms. SANTOS. Mr. Chairman, Senator Kennedy, and members of the committee, good morning.

I am Janis Santos, executive director of the Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start Program. I also serve on the board of directors of the National Head Start Association.

I would like to take just a moment to thank Senator Kennedy for his many years of commitment and dedication to the Head Start children in our country. In Massachusetts, we see him as our champion for Head Start. I have a clear remembrance of him visiting my preschool in Ludlow, MA and reading to our children many years ago. So thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Ms. SANTOS. And Senator Dodd, where I served as an interim grantee in Connecticut for a short time, for your commitment to the Head Start, and members of the committee this morning for their commitment to early childhood education and Head Start.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the thousands of successful Head Start programs across the country and to discuss ways in which Head Start can be improved for the 900,000 children who rely every day on this program for their health, nutrition, and cognitive development.

You have heard a lot today about numbers and studies and data. I bring a different perspective to the discussion—one born of 30 years of experience working with some of the most vulnerable children and families in my community. And for me, the success of Head Start is not about numbers or data; it is about making a difference in the life of one child and one family at a time.

As executive director of the Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start Program for the past 24 years and as a Head Start teacher for 6 years, I have dedicated my entire working life to ensuring that Head Start provides high-quality, comprehensive services to the poorest children in my community, that we work collaboratively with other early childhood programs and with the public school system, and that the program applies the best thinking in early childhood research in our work with our children.

I want to tell you a little bit about the children and families that Head Start serves. My program is the second-largest Head Start program in Massachusetts. We serve 1,200 children in Head Start and 40 infants and toddlers in our Early Head Start program through centers located in three cities and four towns.

We were honored to just be named the new grantee for the migrant program in the State of Massachusetts and will begin this summer serving migrant children.

Our mission statement tells our story. We are committed to providing low-income children and their families with a beacon of hope and a source of support for a brighter future. We strive to do so by providing high-quality, comprehensive child development services to enrolled children and empowering families to achieve stability in their home environment.

Although the children we serve come from diverse backgrounds, and the circumstances of their lives vary, they bring to the classroom a common set of challenges which we seek to meet in preparing them for their first experience in school.

My program is located in one of the most economically disadvantaged regions in Massachusetts. Poverty and stress indicators for the area consistently exceed State and often national percentages. Most of the children in our program come from single-parent household with incomes below the poverty level. Three-quarters of the parents have a high school education or less. For many of the children and families, English is not the first language. And finally, too many of the children in our classrooms have witnessed or experienced domestic or community violence.

For these children and families, Head Start is a safe haven where they encounter the positive experience that help build the foundation that will serve them throughout their school careers and foster curiosity, an interest in learning, and the ability to pay attention in the classroom.

Head Start insists upon a comprehensive range of services because we know that preparing children for school is about more than just teaching letters or numbers.

Consider the example of my student who was part of the witness protection program because he saw his father shot and killed in his apartment in an incident in which the child himself was injured. He was so traumatized by this experience that before we could even begin the process of preparing him to learn, we had to get him the mental health services that allowed him to move beyond the trauma that no young child should ever have to face.

I am so pleased to report that because of this intervention in Head Start, the child is now thriving in elementary school.

For another child in our program, poor nutrition and the lack of good dental hygiene resulted in tooth decay so severe that all of his teeth needed to be pulled. Not only did this painful tooth decay affect his ability to learn; it adversely impacted his speech and his self-esteem.

Through the intervention of the Head Start staff and dental services provided by the program, this boy was put on the road to improvement.

I have literally hundreds and hundreds of anecdotes like this in terms of the comprehensive services that have made the difference

in the lives of so many Head Start children and families, but I know you do not have the time to listen to all of them today.

Head Start fully recognizes and appreciates the importance of serving the whole child. However, that does not mean that literacy is shortchanged in the process. In fact, I can tell you from firsthand experience that Head Start focuses intensely on literacy and numeracy. In my own program, we work closely with the public school system and the university system to design and implement a literacy program that fully prepares our children for kindergarten. In fact, we are often told by kindergarten teachers and school officials that they can recognize Head Start graduates when they enter kindergarten because they are better-prepared than similarly situated peers.

We repeatedly are told that our Head Start children enter kindergarten well-prepared, with good reading readiness skills, social skills, and the ability to pay attention.

I find it curious that this reauthorization has sparked such an interest in the issue of literacy. This may be a new focus for some of the people in this room, but it is not for Head Start. In my own program, we have stressed pre-reading skills and nurtured an interest in books for decades now.

It is true that in the course of the last several years, we have learned a great deal more about the cognitive development of children and have refined and renewed our emphasis on literacy. In my program, we are fortunate to have the resources of a local university that helped us design and implement teaching tools to boost the literacy and numeracy outcomes of our children. This partnership with the local education system proved beneficial when we were searching for ways to improve the pre-math skills of our students. The university worked with us to design a course of instruction that has made a tremendous difference in our ability to teach the new concepts.

Indeed, Head Start is the first of all childhood programs to assess whether the students are learning and the progress being made in their cognitive development. Toward that end, we assess our students three times a year to determine whether they are benefitting from the lessons that we are teaching. And as part of our effort to provide a smooth transition to kindergarten for the children in our Head Start classroom, we provide parents a copy of their children's development assessment—or profile, as we call it. This profile gives parents and, with their permission, the kindergarten teacher a summary of the child's accomplishments while attending our program.

In my remaining short time, I would like to address a few issues directly related to the reauthorization of Head Start.

First, I strongly encourage this committee to reject any form of block grants no matter how limited. Absent the program performance standards that ensure quality, comprehensive services to Head Start children and their parents, the program as we know it will cease to exist.

Second, there has been a great deal of attention on the issue of teacher qualifications. I am a big proponent of improving the quality of instruction in the Head Start classroom. In fact, I insist that our program continually strive to make itself stronger.

In 1976, our program required that each Head Start teacher have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. We had to change this requirement in 1980 to add an associate's degree because of the high turnover of teachers as a result of our inability to pay salaries competitive with those of the local public school system. At that time, we determined that we gained few benefits with more qualified teachers if those same teachers stayed for such a short period of time.

I would encourage you to learn from our experience and provide the new funding necessary to attract and retain these more qualified teachers who otherwise will be lost to the public school system where the salaries are higher.

Third, we know that what we can accomplish with our students and families in the short time they are part of the Head Start family is limited. For some students, they are part of our program for just 9 months. And while much more can be achieved during that period, we know that so much more could be accomplished if Early Head Start were expanded to serve more babies and toddlers.

We believe it is time to make a serious commitment to providing seamless services to children prenatal to the age of 5. To accomplish this goal, we propose that the Early Head Start set-aside by increased and that Head Start grantees be given the flexibility to provide services to children prenatal to 5.

Finally, I would like to say a word about collaboration. I gather that, based on the testimony here today, collaboration and coordination does not work as well in other places as it does in Massachusetts. We collaborate with and have partnerships with dozens and dozens of other programs, including the State government, local government, school districts, and so on. I encourage you to look at these areas where collaboration and coordination is working and to replicate our experience across the country.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Kennedy, thank you for your consideration. I believe that Head Start does need to be a loving and nurturing place for at-risk children. At the same time, we should be demanding in our expectations of children and teachers. I insist upon this in my program, and so should others.

I look forward to working with you to move to reauthorize Head Start.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Santos.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Santos may be found in additional material.]

Senator MIKULSKI. Mr. Chairman, I regret that I will not be able to stay to ask questions, but I would ask unanimous consent that my statement be in the record.

My first job out of graduate school in social work was working as the social worker for a Head Start program. It was a big idea, I think it has had big results, and I look forward to working with you on a big bipartisan effort to reauthorize it.

Thank you, and thank you to all the dedicated people here.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator, and of course your statement will be included in the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Mikulski follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKULSKI

I want to thank Chairman Gregg, Senator Kennedy, Senator Alexander, and Senator Dodd for calling this hearing. I also want to thank the witnesses: Windy Hill, Dr. Reid Lyon, Dr. Marnie Shaul, Amy Wilkins, and Janice Santos. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Head Start had been one of the more successful Federal programs. It's not perfect, and I agree we can improve it. But we can't let reform be a code word for dismantling Head Start. I am concerned that the Bush plan will turn Head Start into slow start or no start.

Head Start is for the poorest children. 74 percent of Head Start families are at or below the poverty level. These children are often the farthest behind in learning to read and learning the alphabet. Yet Head Start makes a difference. In 1 year, these students go from the 16th percentile in vocabulary to almost the national norm.

And Head Start does so much more. It brings children to the doctor to get immunizations or hearing checks. It helps parents get on the right track. Many parents become Head Start teachers and go back to school to get their degrees. It provides nutritious meals for children who might otherwise go hungry. I'm a social worker. I've seen first hand children whose lives were changed by a simple hearing aid. It can make all the difference.

Head Start is working well. I think we can aim higher—especially in academics. Yet it will take a serious investment not a block grant and a prayer.

Currently, only 60 percent of eligible pre-school children are in Head Start, and only 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers are in Early Head Start. In Maryland, about 25 percent of eligible children age zero to 5 years are in Head Start and Early Head Start.

We should expand Head Start to serve all children. Yet the Bush Budget requested only $148 million more for Head Start. That's the same amount provided in the fiscal year 2004 House and Senate Labor/HHS Appropriations bills. It's not even enough to cover inflation. This means communities have to make tough choices between two bad options: diluting the quality of Head Start, or shutting the doors on some eligible children.

The Bush Head Start plan does nothing to solve this problem. It tries to avoid the issue by putting the tough decisions and responsibility on local communities. In my own State of Maryland, we are facing this kind of impossible choice. For years, the Montgomery County contributed $16 million of its own money to run a very high quality Head Start program. But they still didn't have enough money to serve to all the low-income children in Head Start. Recently, Montgomery County proposed using its money for a Pre-K program that would serve more children. But, they also proposed making cut-backs and sacrifices. They proposed cutting back on comprehensive health and family services for the new Pre-K classes. They proposed shortening Pre-K classes, so teachers wouldn't be able to accomplish as much.

And they proposed reducing the number of children in Head Start by almost half.

The Bush Budget forced Montgomery County into this situation by not providing the resources to serve all children in Head Start. Yet the Bush Head Start block grant plan won't help. It enables communities to make these choices. But they are still bad choices between bad options, because the Bush Budget is inadequate. The Bush plan tells communities, "You must sacrifice quality for quantity. You have to make all the tough choices, because the Federal Government won't help you."

The Republican plan is contradictory. On the one hand, it calls for flexibility and block grants. On the other hand, it adds new mandates without providing the resources. The House bill requires that 50 percent of Head Start teachers have Bachelor's degrees by 2008. This will cost at least $2 million. Yet the House bill doesn't provide resources. It authorizes a mere $202 million more, which barely covers inflation.

I think we should improve teacher qualifications. I think Head Start children should have the best teachers available. Yet I am very concerned about more unfunded mandates. Look at what's happening with No Child Left Behind. Are there even enough qualified teachers available, especially in rural areas?

You can't get more for less. You get what you pay for. A block grant is not the answer. Federal investment is the answer. The Bush Budget requested only $148 million more for Head Start. That's what the fiscal year 2004 House and Senate Labor/HHS Appropriations bills provide. It's not even enough to cover inflation. We need to increase Federal funds so that all eligible children can benefit from high quality Head Start. We need Federal leadership to improve academic standards in Head Start and to help coordinate between Head Start and public schools. We need a dedicated Federal investment to help recruit and retain qualified teachers. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. We do have a very strong turnout of member Senators today, so we will limit the questioning to 5 minutes, and I hope people can stick to that so everybody can get their time in.

Let me begin. First, I want to thank the panel. I think the presentations were excellent, and I think it reinforced a lot of the issues that we as a committee are going to have to be looking at, primarily, first, Ms. Santos' point, which is that there are a lot of very wonderful things being done by Head Start, and we want to make sure that in the reauthorization we do not upset what is being done well in order to get on to trying to do other things even better, and that will certainly be a focus of our committee, making sure that the social issues and the nutritional issues and the socialization issues are maintained as an aggressive element of Head Start.

I am not trying to underplay that, but I believe the focus of the reauthorization is going to be around the issue of how we engender a stronger academic experience in the Head Start Program, maybe not in the Holyoke area, where you seem to have a really positive program, but to have consistency throughout the system. I think that that really is the core element of issues that we are going to be dealing with in the reauthorization, although there are some other tangential issues like what the States' role is.

Focusing on the question of assessment and academics, I would be interested in knowing whether we actually know if there are some criteria or a curriculum or a standard that Head Start centers should be trying to get to with these children. I mean what level of numerology, what level of identification of the alphabet or phonics—there is the 10-letter rule that I guess is still in place technically, but hopefully, everybody is ignoring it and getting on to all the letters of the alphabet. I would be interested in hearing from Dr. Lyon or Ms. Hill or others as to is there an identifiable academic standard that we should be trying to seek for children in this age group.

Mr. LYON. I believe there is. I believe that we, under the best conditions and implementation of those conditions, move Head Start youngsters to the average range as the enter kindergarten.

We do have ongoing studies now showing that if we have teachers in place who understand the critical kinds of things kids need to know to be able to succeed in school, our youngsters' development is enhanced dramatically.

We know from both Dr. Whitehurst's research as well as other research—and he will talk to this—that the specific kinds of things that kids need to know in preschool can in fact be brought right up to the average range, and that particular level of development in word-level knowledge, in vocabulary, in phonological awareness, and in print knowledge clearly predicts downstream performance in school.

We do know that a condition where children from preschool or Head Start who are entering kindergarten are in fact moving toward a program that not only reinforces the abilities learned in preschool, but the preschool development in fact meshes quite well with the kindergarten curriculum and the first grade curriculum.

So there are a number of conditions that need to be in place no doubt within the context of a comprehensive program—meaning these kids have to be physically squared away, they have to be well-nourished, the parents, to the best of our ability, need to be involved, and we need to be developing social and emotional competencies systematically but synergistically with the more cognitive language-oriented capabilities.

When we do that well, we clearly have gems or beacons of light where we can move most kids to near or the average range.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Whitehurst, briefly, because my time is up. Please go ahead.

Mr. WHITEHURST. I would just add to that that the criterion should really be, if not a head start, an even start, that children who start school in the normal range, knowing the things that other children do as they enter the kindergarten classroom, are much more likely to succeed academically. Those children who do not have those skills are at very high risk of failure. We can predict reading failure at the end of first grade with 85 percent accuracy from knowledge of what children know as they enter kindergarten.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Ms. Santos, it is wonderful to hear you again, and I think anyone who listens to you and ever has the chance to visit your program

up there understands that what you have told us here in the committee is alive and well in the faces of those children and the well-being of those children. After a lifetime of commitment, we should take your assessment about what is needed for those children and the way to strengthen Head Start with a great deal of attention because it is based upon an enormous amount of personal caring in your own situation and a great deal of knowledge and sort of around-the-clock working at that program. So I am so glad that you have come to help us today.

I was going to ask you about your ideas and suggestions for strengthening the program; you summarized those very briefly—that the earlier the intervention, the better; the continuation of help and support for children from zero all the way up to 5 with good-quality programs; continuing to march toward quality; people working with these children and finding ways to maintain them so that they are not moving into the educational system unprepared. And I want to come back and ask Ms. Wilkins to give a reaction to ideas about how best to do that.

But time is limited, and I would like to ask Windy Hill—in reviewing what the States have done, the real authoritative studies have been the Gilligan and Zigler studies that have been done at Yale, and they indicate that the States have not had such a good record themselves, looking at the quality programs. The Zigler study says only three States have completed an analysis relating classroom quality indicators to the program—South Carolina, Michigan, and Kentucky. Only three States have even looked at it.

Ms. HILL. Well——

Senator KENNEDY. Let me just finish. In their conclusions, they say that "Considerably more needs to be done about the effectiveness of State-funded preschool programs." Effectively, not enough is known about the effectiveness of the State programs. And in the final conclusion, it says, "These positive findings are encouraging for State-funded preschool programs, but on the whole appear to be no more or less encouraging than the findings for other large-scale preschool programs for low-income children such as Head Start, which often suffer from similar methodology limitation in their evaluations." They make a big point about the methodology and evaluations, and effectively, they are concluding that the States are no more or less effective than the large-scale programs like Head Start. We only have a smattering of States that have done this.

What possible sense does it make to roll the dice and give the Head Start Program to the States?

Ms. HILL. Well, I appreciate the research of Dr. Zigler and others in this area. Having been in Head Start for so many years—8 years in a local program, 2 years as a board chairman, 2 years as a policy council chairman, a parent, a child, and a volunteer for several years—I think that early on, early in the 1990's, we began to recognize that not enough was known about Head Start, and people really began to look very closely at its success.

It is true that it does a tremendous amount in the area of comprehensive services, and we are beginning to see early on that States recognize that there is value in adding that comprehensive array of services for children.

It really is a situation where several States have taken the leadership role in showing us that they can and will invest in pre-K programs in a way that models the experiences and the values of Head Start.

The goal is to have more States do what States like Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Georgia have done and to bring that into some kind of alignment, an integrated, coordinated system that takes the best of Head Start and to begin to blend and to mold in a way that all children in the State experience the important early care and intervention.

Senator KENNEDY. I have just 50 seconds left, and I am going to try to get in two questions.

Dr. Lyon, very quickly, the administration has proposed a reporting system that would test the outcomes on two domains of child development—language and literacy, and preschool program. Head Start obviously measures children's outcomes three times a year in language, literacy, math, creative arts, cooperative skills, social relationships, and physical health. Give me your evaluation of each approach, briefly.

And then, finally, Ms. Wilkins, if you would respond to Ms. Santos' concept about how you are going to help keep good-quality teachers, just briefly, I would appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LYON. Senator Kennedy, the fact is we are behind the curve on the development of appropriate assessments for a number of the domains within the comprehensive array provided by Head Start. The first step was to try to carve out from the 1998 list of cognitive indicators those domains that we had good measures on—that is, measures with sufficient reliability and validity and all those kinds of things—to be able to determine if we were doing well by the kids.

Socially and emotionally, we are even further behind the curve in the sense that the measure available typically assess pathology, social pathology and emotional pathology. That puts us in a position to have to develop new measures that are more proactive and pro-social and pro-emotional.

We are in the process, with Dr. Whitehurst, the Institute for Educational Sciences, and NIH, of developing a fairly massive early childhood education research program which includes the development of measures across all of these domains.

To answer your question, we do not have pro-social and pro-emotional measures that can actually give us a good look at how well the kids are doing. What we can do is identify those youngsters who are at risk for attention deficit disorder, other forms of psychopathology, and so forth and so on. That is not good enough, but what we can say is we are working hard to fill out the comprehensive need for these assessments in the areas you are interested in.

Ms. WILKINS. It is an easy answer, Senator. The first thing that needs to happen is that the salary scales in Head Start need to ensure that compensation is closely related to the level of formal education that the teacher has, so that as the teacher increases the amount of education she has, her salary will increase.

And the second thing you need to do is give the Head Start centers the money to pay the teachers. Ms. Santos had to lower her

educational requirements because she could not afford to keep the teachers. If Congress finds the money so that she can pay wages that are competitive to what teachers with B.A. degrees can earn teaching in public schools, you will be able to keep the teachers.

Ms. SANTOS. That is right.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the witnesses for coming today.

We all have a story, and I have one, and a comment and a question about coordination. My story is this. I grew up in a county at the edge of the Great Smokey Mountains, where my mother was literally the only preschool education teacher in the county, and she taught in a converted garage in our back yard. There were 25 3- and 4-year-olds and 25 5-year-olds in the afternoon, and everyone who could afford it paid $25 a month so their child could have that advantage. We learned letters, numbers, music, and we all had an advantage. So I know the advantage, and we have learned so much more about it since then.

My comment is that I think the President has done us a service by putting on the agenda, as only a President can, the concerns of school readiness, of accountability, and of coordination. That is where a lot of the discussion was this morning. Many of you have already been thinking about those things, but for the President to focus on those three things is a help as we think about reauthorizing Head Start.

I think he is also wise to suggest that we should think about what role the States can add to the Head Start Program, but I do not think we should let the whole train run off the track because we have differences of opinion about just how the States should be involved. I would like to see us focus on the first three and do as much as we can on school readiness, on accountability, and on coordination, and I will have some other suggestions about how States might be involved which I would like to share with members of the committee and get their reactions as time goes along.

Now, my question is this, on coordination. In the last 10 years, 42 States have started investing pretty heavily in pre-K, and it is now up to $1.7 billion a year. There are 69 Federal programs that deal with early childhood; that is $18 billion a year, of which Head Start is nearly $7 billion a year.

Can any of you identify, or is there a consensus about or is a listing of the 19,000 Head Start centers around the country that do the best job of coordinating services with the other State programs, the 69 Federal programs, and with the public schools and private schools into which the Head Start graduate? Are there any that we ought to be spotlighting and paying attention to?

Ms. HILL. There are certainly programs that are model programs, like there are States who are beginning to look across programs——

Senator ALEXANDER. Have they been listed somewhere so that we can know them?

Ms. HILL. We do have a list of those who are, I think, exemplary, such as Ms. Santos' program, where we begin to hear more about

how they are coordinating and linking. Unfortunately, the list is not as long as the list of those who are not coordinated and not integrated.

We can develop for you a list of the ones that have been recognized in the last year as having strong programs, but again, it will be a shorter list than the list of those programs that are not——

Senator ALEXANDER. Are there things we can do in Congress to make it easier for a Head Start center director who is in Holyoke or Maryville, TN and who looks up at this array of Federal programs and wonders how do I find them all, how do I figure out whether they are available to my children?

I talk with many of my constituents who just do not know how to get through the maze to find all those—I am sure that is the Congress' fault, but what can we do about it?

Ms. HILL. Congress is to be commended, because in the 1998 reauthorization as well as in the 1994 reauthorization, there was quite a bit of language added to encourage, promote, to move programs to greater coordination in local communities as well as across programs.

Unfortunately, that language is not sufficient to bring about the type of integration and coordination that we have seen to be most effective when you look across programs across the State, when you look for needy children in all pockets of a community as opposed to a particular catchment area.

So I think Congress has done a tremendous amount to this date, but the authority to bring Statewide coordination does not exist within the existing statute.

Senator ALEXANDER. Stepping back if you can, Ms. Hill, from the President's specific proposal, what is the major value, or what can the States bring to the table? What is the most important thing the States could do—if our objectives are school readiness, accountability, and coordination, what is the most important thing that the States could bring?

Ms. HILL. Well, to continue what the States are already doing, recognizing that our ability to provide comprehensive services rests within State governments. We do not pay for medical and dental; we rely on Medicaid and Medicare administered through the State. We do not pay for dental; we rely on SCHIP. We look to our local community partners to link families to needed services, whether it is crisis intervention, domestic violence.

So there is already inherent in the work of the States a great deal of support for Head Start. What we can begin to do is to make it easier to coordinate across those programs through some master plan.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Ms. SHAUL. Could I just also add that Congress has funded the Head Start collaboration centers in States which have had as their focus enhancing collaboration among the childhood programs within States.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Jeffords.

Senator JEFFORDS. I would like to look at it on a little broader scale. Certainly, Head Start has been wonderful to help people with

lower ability, compensation, etc. On the other hand, in the late eighties and early nineties, we discovered, and the world discovered, that children ages 2, 3, 4, and 5 ought to have a good start and that the ability of our Nation would increase with that.

Now we see, because of the economic situation, that early childhood education is being unfunded by the States because they do not have sufficient funds. So it seems to me that we ought to be trying to look at all of these together and to get the money available for these schools, whether it is Head Start or whether it is early childhood education, because if we just turn it over to the States, if they are cutting out on early education now, it is hard for me to see how they are going to handle both and do a good job at either of them.

Ms. HILL. Well, interestingly enough, 2210 certainly takes that into consideration, the House bill, as well as the President's proposal in that it is not about supplanting or driving dollars into State coffers for purposes other than care for young children and early care and education.

Under the House bill and the President's proposal, the States must use Head Start dollars to support Head Start children, and it must also lock in its spending for preschool programs so that if it is a State that is eligible and meets certain threshold requirements, it would be required to maintain its Head Start spending, maintain the number of children currently served, and also maintain its State preschool. So there is protection within the School Readiness Act to ensure that what you just described does not happen. I think the strength in that is that it is not just services, but it is the comprehensive services that have made Head Start this premier program in the country.

Senator JEFFORDS. Ms. Santos.

Ms. SANTOS. I would like to comment on that. I served on the Massachusetts Early Childhood Advisory Council for about 15 years, and I have a good handle on the early childhood programs in Massachusetts, and I remember clearly that it was just over the past years that the Department of Education got involved in the business of early childhood education. During that time that I was on the Council, they were struggling trying to develop standards and actually used the Head Start standard as the model for developing their own.

So I am very much aware of what the early childhood programs are in Massachusetts, and I would say that Head Start is the model. The comprehensiveness of the program, the high quality of the performance standards should be the model for States for their early childhood programs. I know that many educators have said that, and I believe that we should keep the program Federal to local and be the model for our States in early childhood education because of the comprehensiveness and the high-quality standards that we provide to children in all areas.

Senator JEFFORDS. I just think we ought to be looking at the total picture and see how Head Start fits in, so we do not disadvantage situations by funding problems from one to the other.

Ms. HILL. Well, it is interesting that in the 1993-1994 Head Start Quality and Expansion Advisory Committee report, one of the things that was recognized early on was that Head Start has to become more a part of its community and its State, and it cited it

as one of the recommendations. I think what you are seeing in the School Readiness Act and the President's proposal is an acknowledgment that the glass is half full, and that it is important to acknowledge the great need to have Head Start be a part of its broader community, that children are ready to learn, and the alignment occurs between Head Start and its other partners.

But this has the benefit of more than just Head Start. It has always been that national laboratory. Here is our opportunity, and it is an opportunity that we take at no risk to losing Head Start services, since you would maintain the current level of services being provided, maintain the same number of children, you protect the Federal funds, you avoid the supplanting by States—it is an opportunity without risk to begin moving toward a 21st century Head Start.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Dodd.

Senator DODD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank all of our witnesses today for participating and you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, I was planning to introduce a pretty comprehensive bill on Head Start with Senator Kennedy, but at your request, and I appreciate it, we are going to delay doing that for a while to see if we may not be able to work out something.

So I am not going to be placing down a bill before the committee today for their consideration, but I would like to briefly share with the committee some of the concepts and ideas that we are thinking about, at any rate, for the committee's consideration and for the witnesses to respond to.

First, Dr. Lyon, we certainly agree that literacy and issues related to it ought to be enhanced if we can. There is not much of a debate up here about that. The concern we have is that Head Start would become primarily a literacy program and would disregard the other important functions which are absolutely necessary for any hope of a child learning. You may in the laboratory be able to talk about a child acquiring literacy skills, but in the absence of having the other kinds of medical and social requirements that Head Start places such importance on, it seems to us rather difficult to achieve that. So I will not go through that with you.

And by the way, Ms. Wilkins, I want to commend you, because we also include in our legislation the idea that we increase the educational levels of those who work in Head Start. The difference between our proposal and the House proposal, at least as it is presently suggested, is that we pay for it, which you have got to do. There is no point in having this stuff if you cannot pay for it. If we are going to saddle States with huge deficits today and expect them to pick up the cost of that, we might as well not write it, in my view. So I will not dwell on that.

To my colleague, Senator Alexander, who raises some very good points, we also suggest in this proposal that there be greater coordination, which I think is extremely important there. It will give States a greater role in coordination and collaboration, which is I think one goal the States can really help us achieve, among early care and education programs. It would require Head Start programs to align curricula and classroom practice with early learning and school readiness standards and strengthen accountability

among Head Start programs to ensure they are complying with Head Start performance standards. So we invite you to sit with us as well as we try to work out a bill that we can have bipartisan support on.

Let me get to the standards issue if I can with you, Ms. Hill, because I am troubled by what is in the House bill and what the President is proposing.

First of all on the block grant, you said, and I quote from page 9 of your testimony, that "neither the President nor the House proposal allows States to do away with the comprehensive services currently available through Head Start."

In my reading of the bill, however, nowhere do I see that the Head Start performance standards must be retained by any State in order to participate in the pilot. In fact, the language on page 59, lines 5 through 8 of the bill, and I quote, says that "The State standards generally meet or exceed the standards"—"generally meet or exceed"—"the State standards that ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs operated by Head Start agencies." "Generally meet"—that causes a lot of us a great deal of pause. What does the word "generally" mean? Does it mean on average? Does it mean that some standards should be in, but not all? Does it mean, like in horseshoes, that if you get them close, that may qualify, or not? So we have a great concern, and we wonder whether or not you might be willing to strike the word "generally" and just say flat out that if you are going to have any of these programs, they must meet Head Start standards—and not have an escape clause like "generally" in the wording.

What is your response to that question?

Ms. HILL. In terms of the "generally meet or exceed"—you know, I am the neophyte here; this is my first hearing and my first reauthorization——

Senator DODD. Isn't it fun?

Ms. HILL [continuing]. It is quite exciting. But I have noticed that language in State often differs from language in rules and regulations. And whether "generally" stays in or not, I can tell you that Head Start programs generally meet or exceed performance standards now.

Senator DODD. All right. I will not quibble with you here. I am not expecting you to give an answer for the administration; you will have to check. But the point is the word "generally" does give us a lot of pause because it is unclear, it is vague, to put it mildly.

Second, I want to pick up the point—Senator Jeffords raised the issue, and Senator Kennedy did as well—just going back to the States, we have put up this chart—and I know you cannot read this, but we will provide you with it—but just to give you an idea, over the last few months, the number of States that have actually cut back on early childhood learning programs has been significant. The deficits are huge. The $2 billion that the States have been spending in this area has been reduced pretty significantly.

The GAO—and we will provide this for you as well—enumerates the amount of cutbacks that are occurring in early childhood programs across the country.

But second, I think it is important to note as well that where there have been—and this is prior to the cuts, again going back to

the Gilligan study that Senator Kennedy talked about done at the Bush Center at Yale—if you start looking at some of the areas where Head Start plays such an important role, that is, dealing with the whole child and all of his or her needs, only 18 percent of States provide family caseworkers; home visits, 25 percent; dental referrals, only 40 percent of the States do it; nutritious meals, only 50 percent of the States provide any meals at all; mental health, about 55 percent of States provide it; vision and hearing, 58 percent; only 65 percent of States require immunizations for Head Start.

So when we start talking about the State programs and understanding that cuts are occurring, it gets very, very weak in some of the areas that are absolutely critical for Head Start children to receive the kind of support they deserve and need.

I wonder if you might comment on some of these State figures.

Ms. HILL. Well, it is important to note that the changes in States in terms of providing pre-K services have only happened since about 1990, maybe as early as 1985. They certainly have not been on this path as long as Head Start has, since 1965; and it was not until 1972 that Head Start performance standards were put in place to help guide us through this process.

So that States are beginning to make the effort to provide in their pre-K programs the kinds of things that add value to children.

Senator DODD. Don't you acknowledge that these cuts are occurring? Are you not aware that cuts are occurring across the country?

Ms. HILL. Certainly the President's proposal in the School Readiness Act takes into account that States will deal with budget restraints, and that being the case, only those States that are able to make a commitment to Head Start—that is almost equal to Head Start—at least 50 percent of the Federal investment; States that have standards and are willing to implement those standards Statewide. In addition to that, at the end of the process, if they are approved by the Secretary, they must commit to 5 percent additional in terms of State support.

So Title II of the School Readiness Act is not designed for every State, but it is designed to allow those States who are ready, who can meet the threshold, to become partners—a greater partner—in services to Head Start.

Senator DODD. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the panel today.

Let me go back to the issue of what will this all cost. Ms. Hill, the House bill calls for 50 percent of Head Start teachers to have a B.A. by 2008. How much additional funding would that require?

Ms. HILL. Our estimate internally is that the cost for meeting the requirements of the School Readiness Act is about $150 million. I think it is important to note that since 1999, we have added about $1.7 billion into the base of Head Start, and the majority of those funds has gone into the quality money that pays for teacher education. We have met the mandate for AA by 2003 at 50 percent.

Senator REED. So your model presumes a competitive salary level for a B.A. in the localities across the country, and you think that is going to be an additional $150 million?

Ms. HILL. No. The average salary currently being paid to 4-year degreed teachers in Head Start is $25,600. Currently, we have about 29 percent of Head Start teachers with a B.A. We need about 12,000 more to meet the language in the School Readiness Act.

Senator REED. Ms. Wilkins, I think you have a comment.

Ms. WILKINS. Yes. We have estimated a very different cost for meeting the requirements of the House bill. The Trust for Early Education estimates that in order to pay the additional teachers to meet the House requirement, competitive salaries with kindergarten teachers, it would cost about $2 billion over 5 years.

We have also estimated that to provide the supports—that is, the scholarships and other supports—to meet the House requirement, we would need about $1 billion over 5 years.

Senator REED. So we are talking about a range of estimates. [Laughter.] But these things, in my view, tend to get more expensive rather than less expensive, so I would lean somewhere in the middle or even toward Ms. Wilkins' estimates.

In addition, the House bill has put a cap on the training and technical assistance at 2 percent just at the time when we are trying to enhance the skill levels of teachers and improve the quality. Isn't that counterproductive?

Ms. HILL. Well, I think that the House bill, the School Readiness Act, is designed to allow the Secretary to have some authority, some discretion, to use dollars to add more children. When T&TA needs are addressed in a way that satisfies the language of the Head Start Act and the needs of programs, any additional funds would be used to bring more children into Head Start centers.

Senator REED. Well, certainly in terms of the training, it is not discretion with a cap; you are capped out at 2 percent.

Let me turn to another issue because the time is short. About how many religious-sponsored entities participate in Head Start throughout the country?

Ms. HILL. Our latest data is about 115 faith-based organizations.

Senator REED. One hundred fifteen; and how long have they participated in Head Start?

Ms. HILL. The extent varies. It ranges from programs that were in at the beginning of Head Start in 1965 to some that are within 2, 3, 5 years of beginning service delivery.

Senator REED. And in all these years from the beginning, they have been required to meet the anti-discrimination aspects in hiring staff; is that correct?

Ms. HILL. Whatever the current language in the statute at that time, that is what they were required to meet.

Senator REED. And that has not proven an obstacle to these religious organizations that participate?

Ms. HILL. Well, I might point out that it is 115 out of 1,500 grantees and 400 delegates.

Senator REED. But has it been an obstacle to their participation?

Ms. HILL. It is my understanding that many faith-based organizations have attempted to apply to serve Head Start children but have not been successful for a variety of reasons.

We know that Head Start is rooted in faith-based organizations, and elimination of barriers is a goal of the administration by adding language——

Senator REED. But you are begging the question. Has it been a barrier to participation for the 115? Obviously, that is a significant number that are participating today.

Ms. HILL. Well, I think it sounds like a small number compared to the number of grantees currently providing services to Head Start.

Senator REED. Dr. Lyon, have you done any research on the relative difference or relative efficacy of unified religious staff teaching reading versus diversified religious staff teaching reading?

Mr. LYON. No, we have not.

Senator REED. Wouldn't that be important in terms of making decisions, particularly decisions that involve fundamental civil rights?

Mr. LYON. If in fact the question were cast in a context where we had a scientifically robust purpose—that is, we do a lot of examinations of how different curricula, different programs benefit kids from different backgrounds. Frankly, we have not looked at their religious affiliation; what we have looked at is the kinds of things we have been talking about, that being their background, their training, interactions that occur between adults and kids, and so on.

But I will have to take this one back to NIH and talk to my colleague at IES; he may want to comment.

Senator REED. Well, does it suggest to you that you have looked at a myriad of different details, but that one is so far down your list that you have not looked at it? Doesn't that suggest how critical it is in your scientific field?

Mr. LYON. Well, it certainly has been far down my list, I will grant you that.

Senator REED. This opens up an issue, because the House bill has language which I think will be very controversial. Frankly, it does not seem to me to be an impediment to participation to date nor going back 30 years, and it seems to have no scientific basis in terms of the efficacy of teaching children how to read.

I would hope we could move beyond that quickly in this Senate.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I thank all of our witnesses.

Let me start with the administration witnesses and just say that I understand your concerns about ensuring that Head Start children have the pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills that they need to succeed in school. I think everyone shares that goal.

I do not agree that the quality of Head Start explains why children who have gone through most of their lives without support or resources or stimulation are not on par with middle-class children after just 9 months of 3 hours a day in a Head Start program. However, I do agree that we need to take action to ensure that they are on par with school children, and I think we should look at a number of proposals that have been laid before us.

But where you really lose me on your proposed solution is that you propose no requirements for teacher credentials, no money for

large-scale literacy effort in classrooms, and no expansion for children who receive Head Start or receive more intensive services.

What you do say is that in order to strengthen literacy, we ignore all the performance standards that we have worked over the years long and hard to build and strengthen, in favor of allowing States to see if they might do a better job.

Now, it is true that some States have developed some great preschool programs—and my home State of Washington is one of them—but I have talked to a lot of people around my State who administer both Head Start and ECAP, and they all tell me the same thing. They say that the program that they provide through Head Start is far better than what they can provide with State dollars.

Senator Dodd had a chart up here showing how many State are really struggling with budgets right now, and providing additional dollars is not something I have heard any of them talking about.

But what all of our teachers agreed is that the difference comes in the same performance standards that your block grant proposals says we should allow States to ignore. So before we throw the baby out with the bath water, tell me if you have any studies—at all, anything—showing that any State preschool program has better results in improving the achievement of low-income children than Head Start does currently.

Ms. HILL. The first comment in response is that there is not a proposal to throw out the Head Start performance standards. Certainly, everything that has been done——

Senator MURRAY. But your proposal does not say that those performance standards will remain. It gives a block grant to States, who can then choose whether or not to keep those performance standards.

Ms. HILL. There is quality in Head Start in a number of areas, and we have been very successful in Head Start. Having been a——

Senator MURRAY. Is there any requirement in your bill that the performance standards have to be kept if the States get a block grant?

Ms. HILL. Programs are to meet or exceed the current standards that are being implemented in Head Start.

Senator DODD. "Generally."

Senator MURRAY. "Generally."

Ms. HILL. As Senator Kennedy and Senator Dodd have pointed out, they would like to see that "generally" removed.

I can tell you the intent of the administration is not to dilute or dismantle Head Start but to take those things that have been extremely successful in preparing children to the next level, to build on the 1998 platform of early language and literacy and to continue to enhance.

Senator MURRAY. My time is short. I have heard that part of the argument. What I want to know is if there are any studies of any State programs.

Mr. WHITEHURST. Senator Kennedy mentioned a review by Ed Zigler, who is usually acknowledged as the father of Head Start, with respect to State programs and Head Start programs, and that review indicates, consistent with Dr. Shaul's testimony, that we

really do not have rigorous studies that speak either to the impact of Head Start as currently delivered or to the impact of State programs.

Senator MURRAY. OK. So there are no studies on which to base your proposal that say that States are doing much better in performance than the Federal Government is, but we are going to change all that and just give them the benefit of what we do not know?

Mr. LYON. I think what we do know are the conditions that need to be in place wherever the programs are located to optimize our kids' development to get them ready for school. We do know those conditions.

I cannot speak to the State block grant issue. What I can speak to is the need to develop new models where in fact we can bring together interactions to develop all of these capabilities that we are talking about.

And if I could just mention in terms of Senator Dodd's question, the fact is we are finding that the development of social and emotional competencies are enhanced when we can build good seamless programs with teachers who know how to do that, and in fact——

Senator MURRAY. Dr. Lyon, the rhetoric sounds great. The problem is that the Federal Government right now invests $6.5 billion to serve three out of five of our poorest 3- and 4-year-olds. States now invest $2 billion in preschool—much less than the Federal contribution—and the bulk of that funding is concentrated in 10 States, and right now, we see investment in States' budgets just unraveling.

Have any States come forward to you to say that they are going to invest more money in Head Start and maintain the same level of services should we change this program around?

Ms. HILL. Certainly there are States who are very interested in——

Senator MURRAY. Which States have come forward with budget requests to their legislatures for additional dollars?

Ms. HILL. At this point, there are no legislative budget proposals, but there are States who have expressed interest in this model. They appreciate the opportunity——

Senator MURRAY. This model to get Federal dollars sent directly to them rather than to their local communities, so that they——

Ms. HILL. They are interested in a model that allows them to integrate Head Start into their other early care and education programs.

Senator MURRAY. I can tell you that if I were a Governor, I would love to have the Federal Government send me additional dollars so that I could deal with the budget crisis that I was having right now. But I know that that would come at the expense of our current Head Start programs that are meeting performance standards, are doing the best they can, and should have expanded resources to serve more children. I guess that is what really concerns me about this proposal at this time.

I know my time is up, Mr. Chairman. I just want to ask Ms. Santos very quickly—do you have any foster kids in your program, or any homeless students?

Ms. SANTOS. Yes, we do; homeless and foster children, yes.

Senator MURRAY. So you serve all those populations.

Ms. SANTOS. I am sorry?

Senator MURRAY. We always talk about Head Start like we have a bunch of 4-year-old robots who all look alike, and they go through this program and get assessed and move on. The reality of a preschool program, a Head Start program, is that you have homeless children, you have foster children——

Ms. SANTOS. Yes.

Senator MURRAY [continuing]. You have children from one-parent families, two-parent families, kids who may not have had their dad come home last night, or what you described; and I just think we have to be really careful with that perception.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Harkin.

Senator HARKIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sometimes, the longer I am around here, the more it seems like nothing every really changes; we just come back and plow the same ground over and over again.

In the late 1980's, the Council for Economic Development had a major study done. This was a group of CEOs of leading corporations in America, and the head of that group was Jim Ranier, who at that time was the head of Honeywell. They spent the better part of 2 or 3 years studying what needed to be done for economic development—economic development—in the United States based on education.

You would have thought that they might have focused on more science and math courses in college, they might have focused more on technology training in high school. They looked at everything, and at the end, they came up with a report. And do you know what their executive summary said? It said that we must understand that education begins at birth, and the preparation for education begins before birth.

Here was a group of the leading CEOs in America—no social scientists, mind you—doing a study and concluding that we do not focus enough on WIC programs, on maternal and child health care programs, and Head Start programs.

But their focus was on early programs. Now, we know from studies from NIH that 85 percent of brain development occurs before the age of 3. I think that is well-accepted data.

So all the talk I have heard this morning has to do with something after 3 years of age. And Ms. Hill, in your testimony, you do not even mention Early Head Start. You do not even mention it. But I am not singling you out. A lot of you did not, either—a couple of you mentioned it.

Yet if all we are going to do is pour money in after age 3, after a lot of damage has already been done, we are just spending money, and we are not catching up. So it seems to me that what we have got to do is focus more on these early years, Early Head Start.

Right now, you have, what, 3 percent; is that right, Ms. Hill?

Ms. HILL. Yes.

Senator HARKIN. Three percent of eligible kids are served by Early Head Start programs. Again, we can talk about how we are going to do this with the States, and how we are going to monitor this and fix that, but unless and until we commit ourselves as a

nation and as a society to reach down to every pregnant woman and guarantee that she is going to have full maternal and child health care programs, good nutrition programs, to make sure that every baby is born healthy, to make sure there are intervention programs and home visit programs and support for every child early on in life, from zero to age 3, forget about it. You are never going to get any better than what we are doing right now.

I mean, we will do well—Head Start has been a wonderful program; it has been successful—but it has been limited and constrained by the fact that we will not commit the resources needed to get down to these early kids, and even from 3 on. We pay teachers $21,000 a year. That is more than they have been paid in the past.

The kids are there for 3, 3½ hours a day. Most of their days are spent with someone else—spent in a nonloving environment, perhaps, an environment that is not conducive to their social, emotional, and educational well-being. And we expect that 3½ hours a day to somehow overcome the other 21 hours a day that that child is living.

So I have a lot of questions, but I just think we can beat this around, and we can tell you the States—I think Senator Dodd had it right. When you look at what the States are doing, they are not doing one fraction of what we are doing in Head Start in terms of home visits, support services, monitoring, referrals—all that is mandated under Head Start. So it seems to me that if a dispassionate observer came from outer space and looked at what the States were doing and what the Federal Government is doing, they would say the States ought to give everything to the Federal Government and let them run it—not the other way around.

So I think this is one case where theology—or ideology, I should say—ideology has gotten ahead of what we know—not only what we intuitively know, but what we know empirically—over the last 50 years.

So if we just want to ignore the empirical data, if we want to ignore the scientific basis, if we want to ignore all the reports that have been done going back 25 years, fine—but do not expect any more than what we are getting out of Head Start right now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Clinton—thank you for your patience, Senator.

Senator CLINTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I think it is not only very important but essential that we try to sort out the different reactions to the administration's proposal, and I hope that out of this committee, we will have a bipartisan bill along the lines of what Senator Dodd has proposed.

And I am sure that the witnesses, particularly the administration witnesses, understand our concerns and our cautions. I am struck, when I think about programs for children, by how often they are in the States used as piggybanks for other programs, and they do not provide the basis for a sustained commitment.

When we passed the CHIP program back in the Clinton Administration, we put in a provision that States that did not use their money to provide services to children, because they would have had to match those dollars to some proportion, would lose them. I

thought that was a pretty good idea, because I could not imagine any State being willing to stand up in front of their own citizens and the rest of the country and say: Guess what—we did not spend all the money we could have spent to take care of children. But indeed, that did occur.

So there is an enormous amount of not only suspicion but evidence and experience which many of us who have worked on these issues for a long time bring to this debate. And I think the reauthorization that we are considering should be building on the positive changes that took place during the 1990's.

We have already discussed the extraordinary successes of Head Start, and I agree with the research findings and with the experience in the field that we do have to increase the overall educational level of the Head Start teachers. Every Head Start director I know believes that—but where are they going to get the funding to do it?

I know that many Head Start directors are frustrated by the lack of resources which they know they need to provide the high-quality educational services that the children they are entrusted with deserve to have.

But we were making progress. We increased enrollment in Head Start during the Clinton Administration. We increased funding by 120 percent. We created the Early Head Start Program to begin to do exactly what Senator Harkin said we needed to do, which was to focus on infants and toddlers. And in the 1998 reauthorization, we doubled the Early Head Start Program so that it can serve 62,000 infants and toddlers.

We have a long way to go, but we know what direction we should be heading, and with all due respect, the administration is coming to us and essentially raising suspicions in many of our minds that the real agenda is to eventually block grant this important program, turn it over to the States, which have a mixed record at best.

Instead, it would be very helpful if we continued to build on the performance standards and outcomes, if we invested more money in the kind of research that both Drs. Lyon and Whitehurst do, that we actually took the evidence we do have about what works and fund it.

But it is also very hard for any of us who look at the Federal budget to believe that there is going to be the funding available to do any of this. So on the one hand, the budget picture is dismal. Children are always competing with other more powerful forces for the money they need, especially if they are vulnerable poor children. And we do not have the commitment to the performance standards in specifics as opposed to generally that many of us would like to see.

So I do not think you will get any argument from any of us on this committee that anything we can do to improve the quality and the outcomes of Head Start, we are committed to doing. The clearest way of doing that, as Ms. Wilkins has so eloquently advocated, is to put more money into raising the educational levels of the educators in Head Start. I do not see that forthcoming in this proposal.

Instead, I see, as I do with so many of the administration's recommendations, that we are looking at the unraveling of a Federal commitment and the hoped-for State commitment that has not ma-

terialized to date, and we do not really believe it will in all 50 States. There may be exceptions. There may be court decisions like Abbott in New Jersey that force a State to act. But I have been around for a long time. We have been fighting this battle for decades. If the States really wanted to do this, they would have done it. Head Start started because we knew that in the absence of a Federal commitment to poor children, there would be very few States that would provide the services that these children deserve to have.

And I do not in any doubt the sincerity of the witnesses, but the facts and the evidence of decades of experience lead me to doubt the administrations intention.

So I am hoping that what we can do is, in a bipartisan way here on our committee and in the Senate, under our chairman's leadership and Senator Kennedy and Senator Dodd's leadership, come up with a reauthorization that truly will build on the progress we made in the 1990's, put some real dollars into it, and put Head Start on a firm footing for the 21st century, with additional requirements and standards, which every decent Head Start person I have ever talked to is begging for. And I hope that we are going to be able to produce that, and I would look forward to working with the administration to achieve that goal, but it is going to take money and commitment, not just rhetoric.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

I want to thank the Senators for their patience and for their participation. This has been an excellent hearing. We especially thank the panel for their presentations, which were extremely informative.

Thank you very much. Have a great day.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WINDY M. HILL

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today on the President's plan to strengthen Head Start as one means for helping to ensure that every child has the opportunity to enter school ready to learn. I testify before you not only as the Associate Commissioner of Head Start, but also as a former Head Start child and the mother of a Head Start child who is now an accomplished high school student following her "great start" in Head Start. I truly believe that the President's plan will help ensure that our preschool children will indeed have the opportunity to enter kindergarten ready to learn and prepared with knowledge and skills they must have to succeed no matter where they started.

I believe the House took a major step toward ensuring that Head Start children have the skills they need to succeed in school by marking up legislation to reauthorize and strengthen the Head Start program. We look forward to building on the momentum created by H.R. 2210, the "School Readiness Act of 2003", and your hearing today to move the Head Start reauthorization forward in the coming weeks.

Head Start was launched in 1965 as part of a bold, "big idea"—that no child should be limited in his or her education because of the circumstances of their families. For 38 years this country has demonstrated a national, bipartisan commitment to this "big idea". Congress has sustained funding for the Head Start program and has shown a willingness to make changes when necessary to improve outcomes for children such as the addition of the Program Performance Standards and raising teacher qualifications. We have the same goal—to prepare children—many like me—for success in school and later in life. Given that goal, none of us should be satisfied until we have achieved the vision reflected in the "big idea" that is synonymous with Head Start—that economically disadvantaged children should arrive at school on a more level playing field with economically advantaged peers. While anything short of fully achieving this goal should not be seen as a failure, we must all see it as a challenge for us to do even better.

Consequently, when research showed that Head Start graduates, even those making significant progress, continue to lag too far behind on a number of important indicators of early literacy and math skills, the President and Secretary Thompson sent a clear message—given this compelling evidence, more had to be done to strengthen the educational outcomes for children. As part of the President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative, we were directed to increase the knowledge and skills of Head Start teachers in the area of preschool language and literacy and to create and manage a National Reporting System that will help measure children's progress in mastering the skills necessary to prepare them for a lifetime of learning.

Furthermore, the broader social context has changed dramatically since 1965 when many States were just beginning to implement universal kindergarten and no State had a publicly funded preschool program primarily targeted to low-income children. In 1965 there was no need for Head Start to coordinate with State-run preschool programs because there weren't any. Today, more than 40 States and the District of Columbia have early childhood programs of their own. Numerous States are creating or revising their standards for child care and preschool programs. Research also supports the importance of providing comprehensive services, so States now are involved in trying to integrate a multitude of other programs aimed at young children and their families—including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Medicaid, special education, developmental screening, and outcome assessments.

In response to the President and Secretary Thompson's charge and our changing social context, we looked for ways to improve the effectiveness of the Head Start program. Much about the program was working, and working well, but we knew the program needed to move ahead—particularly in the area of educational gains and coordination. I would like to briefly describe our on-going efforts to improve the educational component of Head Start over the past 2 years, as well as provide detail on the President's innovative proposal.

The Bottom Line is School Readiness

The bottom line for the President, and now underscored in H.R. 2210, is school readiness—improving early childhood learning experiences while holding programs accountable for achieving positive educational outcomes. Research tells us a great deal about the skills and knowledge children need to be successful in school. Success in school is a strong predictor of success in life, as reflected in lower delinquency

rates, less teen pregnancy, higher income, fewer health issues, less suicide, and so forth.

Federal and State governments currently spend more than $23 billion each year for child care and preschool education—and much more than that when you consider the other State health, nutrition, and welfare-related programs that serve these same children and families. Never has there been such a clear commitment on the part of Federal and State governments to enhance the well-being of children and families. Never have we known so much about what children need for healthy growth and development. Never have so many programs been focused on meeting these needs of our most vulnerable children and families.

At this same time, however, though Head Start children make progress in areas of school readiness during the Head Start year, they continue to lag behind their more economically advantaged peers on a number of important measures of early literacy and math skills at kindergarten entry.

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is at the center of our research on the quality of Head Start and the outcomes for children. In the FACES studies, child outcomes are measured through direct assessment, observation, and parent and teacher ratings, drawing upon a nationally stratified random sample of 3,200 children. FACES provides national data on Head Start child outcomes, family involvement, key aspects of program quality and teacher practices.

Research findings from FACES allow us to compare the performance of Head Start children enrolled in 1997–1998 with children served in 2000–2001. Both groups of children entered Head Start with levels of academic skills and knowledge far below national norms. Both groups demonstrated progress in early literacy and social skills and that is good news. However, their overall performance levels when they left Head Start still remained significantly below national norms for school readiness and that is not good news for these children. Therefore, we must do more to ensure that Head Start children enter kindergarten with strong early literacy and math skills.

In responding to the President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative, the Head Start Bureau has already undertaken a number of efforts aimed at bolstering the school-readiness of Head Start children. The Strategic Teacher Education Program, known as STEP, launched last summer, was designed to ensure that every Head Start program and every classroom teacher has a shared, basic, fundamental knowledge of early language and literacy development, and of state-of-the-art early literacy teaching strategies. More than 3,300 local program teachers and supervisors have received this training and have served as "trainers and coaches" to the nearly 50,000 Head Start teachers across the country. I am pleased to report that the local trainers, coaches, and directors are reporting that the STEP training is making a difference in their classrooms.

Following the summer training sessions, the Head Start Bureau conducted national training on mentor-coaching and on the social-emotional development of young learners. These events expanded the skills of teachers and supervisors in fostering effective classroom learning environments and additional teaching practices. A national web-based resource, called STEP-Net, has been created to help early literacy specialists and coaches access and use resources and tools, and to exchange information and promising practices.

As you know, the President has made accountability a guiding principle of this Administration. In keeping with that principle, we are working to make sure that we measure the outcomes of our efforts, not merely the services that make up each of our programs. To that end, one of the most important indicators of any program's efficacy is whether or not it helps those it is intended to help reach certain goals and outcomes.

Good Start, Grow Smart, therefore, calls for not only the improvement and strengthening of Head Start through intense, large-scale efforts in the areas of early language and literacy, but also for a method to track the results of this effort. Good intentions, although better than bad intentions, are not good enough. This Administration believes that we must also challenge ourselves to determine whether or not good intentions and well-designed implementation are translating into good outcomes. We must, therefore, do a better job of determining how well Head Start children across the country are being prepared for kindergarten success. This fall we will begin implementing the national assessment of some of the congressionally-mandated, school readiness indicators for the 4-year-old children in Head Start.

In developing this child outcomes assessment system, we worked with, and will continue to work with a technical workgroup that advises and guides the selection, development, field-testing and use of reliable and valid measurement tools for Head Start children. When no reliable and valid instruments currently exist, we will engage the appropriate researchers to develop or refine them before including them

in this outcomes reporting system. Our short-term goal is to include only those assessment tools that are reliable and valid for use with economically disadvantaged 4-year-old children with the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic differences of Head Start children.

The President's Proposal

We believe this focus on the educational component of Head Start and the measurement and assessment of outcomes will move the Head Start program to a higher level of overall success for low-income children. However, even more must be done as we have heard from Governors, advocates, and even some Head Start directors that a lack of adequate coordination between Head Start and State-administered programs is undermining the program's ability to provide high quality preschool services to as many children as possible throughout every State. Where coordination is not currently occurring, we are finding large gaps and patchy areas in our safety net, to the detriment of young children and their families.

In some places, State pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs are located in the same community and one or both programs are under-enrolled and are competing for the same children and families. Meanwhile, there are other communities where large numbers of children remain unserved by either State pre-kindergarten or Head Start. To further complicate this issue, when services in the early childhood years are not well coordinated, children can end up in three different settings within a single day: for example, early childhood special education services, Head Start and child care.

Lack of coordination accelerates troubling and often, avoidable problems—one of them is under-enrollment. Our most recent statistics indicate that a Head Start program, by mid-year can be under-enrolled by seven percent. Nationwide this would translate as 62,000 slots for children that the Federal Government is paying for, but are going unfilled. We believe a growing problem of under-enrollment is caused, at least in part, by Head Start programs and other early childhood programs competing for the same children, rather than collaborating to serve as many children as possible.

To strengthen the Head Start program, improve services to low-income children, and promote the coordination and integration of early care and education services, President Bush is asking Congress to include a provision in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act to allow interested States to plan for, manage, and integrate Head Start in their overall plans for preschool services.

As part of the solution, under both the President's proposal and in H.R. 2210, States are offered the opportunity to coordinate their preschool programs and child care programs with Head Start in exchange for meeting certain accountability, maintenance of effort and programmatic requirements. States eligible to participate must submit a State plan for approval to the Secretary of Health and Human Services that addresses several fundamental issues.

The School Readiness Act supports the President's plan in other ways as well. Each State must indicate in its plan how it would better coordinate Head Start with State-administered preschool programs. The shared goal in making this option available to the States is to coordinate preschool programs to better meet the needs of more children. In addition, the State plan must address how it will work to develop goals for all preschool children in the State and devise an accountability system to determine whether children are achieving the goals. In keeping with the President's plan, H.R. 2210 concurs that States must describe in their plan how they will maintain the comprehensive range of child development services for children supported by Head Start funds, including the provision of social, nutrition and health services, and guarantee that they will continue to provide at least as much financial support for State preschool programs and Head Start as they are currently providing.

The President's proposal, and now, the School Readiness Act, share characteristics that are frequently misunderstood, misinterpreted or overlooked altogether. I imagine, Mr. Chairman, that you and your colleagues have received numerous phone calls and letters around some of these issues. I would like to speak directly to a few of those areas.

First, neither the President, nor the House is proposing to block grant Head Start funding to the States. In fact, Head Start will continue to be managed as a Federal-to-local program, except in those instances where States are "eligible" to apply and are funded for integrated preschool services that are approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. To be clear on this point, no State will be required to take advantage of this opportunity nor is anyone proposing that the Head Start program be turned over to States with no strings attached.

Second, neither the President nor the House proposal allows States to do away with the comprehensive services currently available through Head Start. Indeed, States taking advantage of this option must make a commitment to maintain the comprehensive services currently available through Head Start for those children who, under the State plan, are supported with Head Start funds. In addition, this Administration believes that the need for parental involvement in Head Start is a vital component to its success.

Third, both the President's plan and the House bill make clear that the Federal Government will not cease or relinquish its oversight responsibilities for the Head Start program. Under the President's proposal, States who choose this option and who have their plans approved will still be accountable to the Federal Government for their use of Head Start funds and for achieving positive outcomes for children. In cases where a State does not choose this option or where a State's plan is not approved, the Federal Government will continue to administer the Head Start program as a direct Federal-to-local program.

And the final major area of agreement I want to mention is that neither the President's plan nor H.R. 2210 will allow States to supplant State preschool—or any other State funds—with Head Start dollars. Neither would a State be eligible if they reduced their State spending levels on early childhood programs. Indeed, H.R. 2210 concurs with the President's proposal that States must maintain their current level of State spending on preschool programs.

Current Partnerships

Even in its historical, Federal-to-local program structure, Head Start has always recognized the important role that States play in the formulation and implementation of policies and initiatives that affect low-income children and their families. Partnerships have always been one of Head Start's highest priorities. These include partnerships with local school districts, nearly 450 of which operate Head Start programs, and partnerships with local governments—with 150 city and county governments now operating Head Start programs.

In addition, we currently have State collaboration projects in all 50 States, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. One of their roles is to facilitate significant, statewide partnerships between Head Start and the States in order to meet the increasingly complex challenges of improving the quality and efficiency of services for economically disadvantaged children and their families.

Through these and other efforts at the State and local levels, Head Start has sought to support the development and enhancement of State-level efforts to build early childhood systems through linkages, coordination, and integration of goals, policies and services. We will continue these efforts to forge meaningful partnerships on behalf of children and families to remove as many obstacles to partnership as possible. In addition, the reauthorization of the Head Start Act affords us the opportunity to do even more, by offering States the option to include Head Start in their State preschool plans.

The Time is Right

One of the reasons the Head Start program has remained strong over the course of nearly four decades is that it adapts to accommodate the changing needs of children, families and communities. Now, more than ever, economically-disadvantaged children and their families need a strong, coordinated system of early care and education to help families and children succeed.

The time has come to allow full integration of early childhood services and preschool education, including Head Start within States. We cannot afford to disperse resources through overlapping, competing or ill-coordinated early childhood programs.

Most importantly, we cannot afford to have children slip through the cracks that non-systematic approaches create. We do not want any more preschool children—Head Start and others—to be left in the early childhood "learning gap", particularly when children with the greatest need for support continue to remain well below national norms of school readiness.

Our children and families deserve the best programs that we can provide and that States and communities can support. The President asks that you allow States the option of integrating Head Start—our nation's leading program for low-income preschoolers—into their planning for, and delivery of coordinated services.

Other Improvements

Before concluding my statement, I would like to briefly highlight a couple of other aspects of the President's Head Start reauthorization proposal that will strengthen our ability to ensure program quality and accountability and better support school readiness.

Of particular note, our proposal would change the current set-aside for training and technical assistance to provide the Secretary with greater discretionary authority to allocate these resources each year in a manner that will maximize benefits to children and families. Our proposal would also provide flexibility in targeting necessary funding for quality improvements. Training and technical assistance resources have grown considerably in recent years at a rate well above the growth of Head Start—while, at the same time, grantees have had access to quality improvement funds that provide them additional resources for these activities. These changes will allow the Secretary to determine the most appropriate level of funds, taking into account all the other needs of the program, the children and their families. For example, in fiscal year 2004, the increased flexibility will provide enrollment increases in areas of the country with the greatest unmet needs for Head Start services.

Conclusion

This committee has worked tirelessly over the years to provide a solid support system for our nation's most vulnerable children and families. Head Start remains a part of our nation's commitment to the original "big idea" that no child can be left behind because of the circumstances of their families or communities. This means that while recognizing the important contribution that Head Start has made over the past 38 years, we can, should and must do more—for we have not yet fulfilled the full promise of the Head Start program.

The Administration is committed to strengthening the educational component of Head Start and improving the coordination of services to benefit school readiness for preschool children. Given the current social environment, with the collage of services available, we believe it is time to test a new approach to coordination. Can we guarantee that it will work? That is an empirical question to be answered through assessment of outcomes—and I believe that is one reason that the House concurs with the President's proposal to give at least some States the option to develop new ways to better coordinate services for low-income children and families rather than proposing a block grant. Under this option, the Administration is committed to carefully monitor progress, measure results, and determine whether States can successfully offer alternatives that will result in better outcomes for children. At the same time, our efforts to strengthen the educational aspects of the Head Start program will continue and the outcomes will be examined.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your commitment and dedication to the well-being of our nation's children, and thank you—Members of the Committee, for your desire to hear more about our strategies to make Head Start stronger to impact the lives of children and families. I look forward to any continued dialogue as work proceeds on the reauthorization of the Head Start program. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF G. REID LYON

THE CRITICAL NEED FOR EVIDENCE-BASED COMPREHENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Reid Lyon and I serve as the Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I am honored and humbled to appear before you today to discuss several critical issues that must be addressed if we as a Nation are to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn.

I am humbled because I know of no greater gift, beyond the basics of life, love and health, that we can give to our children than to provide them with the social, emotional and cognitive foundations that will enable them to succeed in school. I have spent a good part of my career studying reading development and reading difficulties and directing research programs that study children and their development from kindergarten into their adult years. It is very clear to me that young children who come to kindergarten without essential language, early reading and math skills and other cognitive and conceptual abilities are already at risk for significant school failure.

Comprehensive Preschool Programs: Helping Children Become Ready for School and Ready to Read

Our research tells us that children entering kindergarten who understand the structure and sounds of words, the meanings of words, the rudimentary elements of the writing system, and the concept that print conveys meaning, have significantly higher reading scores at the end of the first grade than children who do not

have these skills. In fact, the difference between children who do and do not have this knowledge upon entering kindergarten is approximately one year's worth of reading development at the end of the first grade. We also know that well over 80 percent of children reading poorly at the end of the first grade will be reading poorly at the end of the fourth grade. We know that if we do not close these gaps by nine years of age, there is an overwhelming probability that reading failure will follow the individual into adulthood. Data obtained from the NICHD Connecticut Longitudinal Study show that approximately 75 percent of students reading poorly at nine years of age continue to flounder in reading into the adult years. To be sure, limited reading abilities portend dire consequences.

Unfortunately we are not talking about a small number of lives that are adversely affected by reading and academic failure. Over the past decade, almost 40 percent of the nation's fourth graders, and at least 60 percent of fourth-grade children growing up in poverty have failed to meet basic literacy standards. For example, in many urban school districts the percentage of fourth grade students who cannot read at the basic level approximates 70 percent. By grade twelve, Black and Hispanic students read, on average, at the same level as white eighth grade students. And the majority of these children would not suffer from reading failure in grades four or twelve if they entered kindergarten with a strong language foundation and with a good understanding about print, sounds, sound-letter connections, and writing concepts, followed by strong early reading supports in the first few years of school. In fact, the National Research Council (Snow et al., 1998) estimated that if children receive proper exposure and systematic opportunities to develop foundational language, reading, and emergent writing skills during early childhood, as few as five percent may experience serious reading difficulty. This would be of enormous benefit to our children, to their families, and to society. Preschool programs that succeed in promoting children's language and early literacy skills—so they enter school with age-appropriate competencies—have been proven to change the course of children's school careers and their adult lives (Ramey & Ramey, 2001).

In the next decade, if the American early care and education system does not change, millions more children will never realize their potential. What makes this issue so compelling and troublesome is it does not have to be this way. We do know a good deal about the foundational preschool abilities that predict success or failure in reading in the early grades, and we are making substantial progress in identifying the characteristics of high quality preschool programs that are able to help three and four year old children acquire these critical abilities.

We also know that preschool children from disadvantaged environments are significantly behind their more affluent age-mates in linguistic skills essential for later reading development. Our research tells us that this is because youngsters growing up in low-income environments engage in significantly fewer literacy (e.g., shared book reading) and language (adult-child discussions) interactions in the home. As Hart and Risley pointed out in their NICHD supported research with professional, working class and welfare families, the average child on welfare was having half as much experience listening and speaking to parents (616 words per hour) as the average working-class child (1,251 words per hour) and less than one third that of the average child in a professional family (2,153 words per hour). What does this mean? It means that our preschool programs must provide children from low-income families with systematic and evidence-based interactions to close these gaps. In many ways, a comprehensive preschool program designed to help children develop the necessary cognitive, language, early reading, social and emotional competencies is their last hope to eventually succeed in school.

Let me be more specific about why youngsters from low-income environments are at substantial risk for reading, and thus school failure. A number of studies conducted by Grover Whitehurst, Chris Lonigan and their colleagues with children ranging in age from two to six found that phonological sensitivity (the ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of oral language) and letter knowledge were highly predictive of success and failure in developing later reading skills in kindergarten and first grade. When comparisons were made between low and high-income children, two conclusions were evident. First, children from low-income families have significantly less well-developed phonological sensitivity than children from higher income families. Second, children from lower income families experienced significantly less growth in phonological sensitivity during the preschool years compared to their higher income age-mates. In a recent study reported in 2002, Lonigan studied longitudinally the growth of phonological sensitivity and print knowledge of 325 three to 5-year old children attending Head Start. Over a 1 year period, these youngsters experienced average approximate growth of 1.3 items on phonological sensitivity tests and learned on average 4.4 letter names, .45 letter sounds, and 8 new words assessed on an expressive vocabulary measure. These

gains were much less than those made by children from middle-income families. The gap between low and higher-income children in these foundational abilities is quite stark when you consider that the typical middle-class child will learn nine new words a DAY from 18 months of age until entry into school, and will be able to name all the letters of the alphabet upon entry into kindergarten. These gaps are indeed unfortunate given that reading scores in the 10th grade can be predicted with robust accuracy from knowledge of the alphabet in kindergarten.

Can We Close These Gaps

Yes. The *Strengthening Head Start* report prepared by HHS in 2003 provides several examples of programs that provide comprehensive interventions with systematic language and pre-academic components that develop the knowledge and skills necessary for kindergarten and the early grades and for closing the achievement gap between children from higher and lower-income environments. I would like to request that this report be entered into the formal record. As noted in the report, Dr. Landry's CIRCLE program has found that Head Start teachers who received two years of professional development to learn how to teach oral language skills, phonological abilities and print awareness skills along with interactions to help develop social and emotional competencies significantly increased the development of these abilities in the children served by these teachers involved in the training. In addition, NICHD supported research over the past 5 years conducted by Joseph Torgesen and Chris Lonigan at Florida State University has found that a preschool emergent literacy program designed to develop oral language, phonological sensitivity, and print awareness produced significantly more growth in these skills than children not receiving the program. Again, why is this important? Because these three areas of emergent literacy are significant contributors to how easily, quickly and well children learn to read.

Why Has the Development of Cognitive, Language and Early Literacy Skills Been De-Emphasized in Head Start and Other Early Childhood Programs?

For many years, Head Start and other early childhood programs have focused on healthy development, adequate nutrition, help for families with problems, and social/emotional readiness and general cognitive development with lower priority given to the development of language, and early reading and math skills. One reason for this is a concern among many early childhood educators that any focus on cognitive readiness will compromise a child's social and emotional well-being. A frequently heard concern is that exposure to "academic" content during preschool is not "developmentally appropriate" and such exposure tends to "hurry" and "stress" the child at the expense of emotional health and developing social skills with peers. In fact however, if stress is produced in introducing cognitive concepts during preschool, the evidence shows that it has nothing to do with the youngster's ability to learn the concepts, and everything to do with the manner in which the information is presented. This is a teaching issue—not a content issue.

Three and 4-year-old children are not first graders and should not be taught as such. They should not be exposed to cognitive concepts while being asked to sit still or remain attentively quiet for long periods, and they should not be presented with rote information practiced through drills and routines (I would argue that first graders should not have to endure this either). I mention this because it is a frequently voiced concern. However, we do know that most children, irrespective of background, can learn foundational cognitive and language skills (including vocabulary, reading, and math skills) in preschool when their interests are recognized, supported, and extended rather than ignored or redirected. We also know that preschool children enjoy learning new vocabulary, letter names, letters sounds, and number and science concepts when caregivers and preschool teachers: (1) are sensitive to a child's level of understanding, (2) are contingently responsive to a child's signals, (3) are able to maintain and build on a child's focus, (4) avoid high levels of restriction on behavior and oral language usage, and (5) provide choices and adapt to a child's changing needs. We also know that children learn cognitive, language, and literacy concepts through a blend of child-directed discovery and teacher-provided explicit information about vocabulary, letters, and number concepts.

Nevertheless, while the belief that preparing a youngster's cognitive readiness will compromise social and emotional well-being is unfounded scientifically, it does continue to pervade the early childhood culture and leads to predictable outcomes. Children do demonstrate short-term gains in social and emotional development in programs like Head Start but demonstrate limited to no long-lasting gains in cognitive, reading and math skills. As a result, graduates of programs like Head Start

typically enter kindergarten with much lower skill levels than their non-poverty peers.

Another reason it has been difficult to close the gap between what we know from converging research and preschool practices is the difficulty we face in translating current scientific findings into practice in a timely fashion. For example, in the mid 1960s, developmental science suggested that the major tasks for children during the preschool years revolved around socialization—separating from the home environment, learning how to interact with peers, developing healthy emotional attachments to unfamiliar adults and experiencing new material in novel environments. Likewise, it was known that the development of social, emotional, and cognitive capabilities was extremely difficult if children were not well nourished, physically healthy and supported by parental involvement and responsive social systems. And it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the significant contributions that Head Start provided in developing and implementing this knowledge into preschool practice in our nation's most disadvantaged communities.

But, as Dr. Zigler stated in 1996, "Head Start's goal is, and always was, to prepare children for school." Over the past 3 decades it was thought that ensuring adequate nutrition, healthy bodies, emotional health and social competencies would lead to robust learning in school. To be sure, physical health, adequate nutrition, parental involvement, family social services, and interactions to develop emotional health and social competencies are necessary to achieve this goal, but they are not sufficient. Social and emotional competence do not guarantee school readiness and academic achievement. Children also must come to kindergarten and first grade with strong foundational knowledge of language, reading, math, and science concepts essential for success. The good news is that high quality early childhood education programs can ensure that preschoolers develop these fundamental language and cognitive concepts as noted earlier. The bad news is that far too many children are spending time in preschool settings—including many Head Start classrooms—that do not meet a child's essential learning and cognitive needs, and thus neglect a very important aspect of child development.

In short, there have been major advances in research showing us that preschool-age children are ready to and can learn language, reading, mathematics, and science concepts to a far greater extent than previously thought. Our research tells us that if preschool-age children are not taught and do not learn these concepts and skills, they will not be ready for school. Unfortunately, our research also indicates clearly that Head Start, as traditionally structured and implemented, is not fully achieving its stated purpose of promoting school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children. Our studies continue to point to the fact that low-income children from Head Start programs perform significantly below their more advantaged peers in reading and mathematics once they enter school. This gap places an unfair burden on the children so that from the very first day of kindergarten they are already behind. This is unfortunate because, with proper preschool instruction, they can enter school on an equal footing with every other child

What Do the Data Tell Us About Head Start and School Readiness?

As mentioned earlier, a recent report by the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation reviewed the literature relevant to the effectiveness of Head Start in closing the gap in educational skills and knowledge for school success. The conclusions drawn from this review of the evidence are sobering and will no doubt be controversial. The bad news is that many children in Head Start are not getting what they need to succeed in school. The good news is that children in Head Start and other early childhood programs can make significant gains if the programs implement effective early childhood instructional practices, which will enhance the comprehensive mission of Head Start.

I would like to summarize the major findings of the *Strengthening Head Start* report. First, allow me to provide some relatively good news that the report provided based on data obtained from the 1997 and 2000 Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES).

1. Head Start children made some progress in some areas:

A. In 2000, the mean standard score for vocabulary increased 3.8 points, from 85.3 to 89.1 on a scale for which the average is 100. This result is similar to the data for 1997 that showed Head Start children scored about 85, at the beginning of the year and gained about 4 points by the end of the year.

B. In 2000, the mean standard score for writing increased by 2 points, from 85.1 to 87.1.

C. In 2000, children showed gains in book knowledge and print conventions (that is, they can show an adult the front of a storybook and open it to where the adult

should start reading). This progress is statistically greater than for the 1997 Head Start year during which no progress was made in this area.

D. Spanish-speaking children in Head Start showed significant gains in English vocabulary skills without declines in their Spanish vocabulary.

E. Children showed growth in social skills and reduction in hyperactive behavior during the Head Start year. Even children with the highest levels (scoring in the top quarter) of shy, aggressive, or hyperactive behavior showed significant reductions in these problem behaviors. Teachers rated children's classroom behavior as more cooperative at the end of the Head Start year than when children first entered the program.

F. Children who received higher cooperative behavior ratings and lower problem behavior ratings from Head Start teachers scored better on cognitive assessments at the end of kindergarten, even after controlling for their scores on cognitive tests taken while in Head Start.

G. Children who entered Head Start in 1997 showed significant gains in their social skills, such as following directions, joining in activities, and waiting turns in games and gains in cooperative behaviors, according to ratings by teachers and parents. The quality of children's social relationships, including relating to peers and social problem solving, also improved.

H. Head Start has other positive qualities. In 1997, the program received very high ratings of satisfaction from parents, and for the roughly 16 percent of children in Head Start with a suspected or diagnosed disability, 80 percent of parents reported that Head Start had helped them obtain special needs resources for the child.

2. Most children enter and leave Head Start with below-average skills and knowledge levels. Unfortunately, the 1997 and 2000 FACES data indicate that despite some strengths within the Head Start program, many children are being left behind:

A. The 1997 FACES data indicate that children enter Head Start at shockingly low levels compared to the average performer (performance at the 50th percentile) on measures of vocabulary (average percentile=16), letter recognition (average percentile=27), early writing (average percentile=16) and early mathematics (average percentile=17) and leave the program showing only very modest gains in vocabulary (average percentile=23), early writing (average percentile=23) and early math (average percentile=19). Note that these improvements still indicate performance far below the average range. Note also that exit performance on the letter recognition task, something that children love to learn, and is one of the predictors of later reading ability, remained low, even declining slightly to the 25th percentile.

B. The more recent 2000 FACES data show modest improvement in results for children, but overall progress is still too limited. Children continue to lag behind national norms when they exit Head Start. Data from Head Start FACES 2000 show that:

i. The level of children's achievement in **letter-recognition** for the 2000 Head Start year is far below the majority of U.S. children who typically know all letters of the alphabet upon entering kindergarten, according to the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the Kindergarten class of 1998.

Spanish-speaking children in Head Start did not gain at all in **letter recognition** skills in 2000.

ii. Although **writing** scores increased 2 points during the 2000 Head Start year, this was a drop from children who entered Head Start in 1997 who increased 3.8 points in writing during that year.

iii. Though children who entered Head Start in 2000 made more progress in some areas compared to 1997, scores at the end of the Head Start year remained far below the average level in all areas of competency. For example, over the Head Start year, vocabulary development increased from the 16th percentile to the 23rd percentile (identical to 1997). Letter recognition upon entry into the program was at the 31st percentile and remained at the 31st percentile at the completion of the program. Early writing skills increased over the year from the 16th to the 23rd percentile and early mathematics skills also increased from the 21st to the 23rd percentile.

iv. As noted earlier, children who entered Head Start in 2000 made progress in early **mathematics** during the Head Start year that was statistically significant; however the difference was miniscule (from 87.9 to 89.0 on a scale where 100 is the average). Moreover, this amount of progress was no greater than that found for children who attended Head Start from Fall to Spring in 1997.

v. Children who entered the program in 2000 with overall lower levels of knowledge and skill showed larger gains during the program year than children who entered with higher levels of knowledge. However, they still lagged far behind national averages.

vi. Head Start children did not start kindergarten with the same social skill levels as their more economically advantaged peers and they continue to have more emotional and conduct problems than do middle class peers.

vii. Only 25 percent of Head Start teachers were college graduates, compared to 86 percent in State pre-K programs. Research points clearly to the important role of teacher knowledge and education in learning outcomes for children, including preschoolers.

In summary, there is more work to do. Despite small gains and the positive qualities of Head Start programs, children in Head Start are making only very modest progress in only some areas of knowledge and skill, and children in Head Start are leaving the program far behind their same-age peers. To be sure, Head Start programs vary significantly in quality as well as in the amount of time children attend Head Start programs. Some youngsters spend only part of the day, week and year in a program, while other children are provided programs for the entire day, week and year. These differences will certainly affect the overall outcomes for children, since both quality and quantity of learning experiences impact children's progress. What we must do is identify those factors and conditions that characterize high quality Head Start programs and duplicate them in all Head Start programs. More progress must be made and can be made to put Head Start children on par with others by the time they enter kindergarten.

3. **Disadvantaged children lag behind their age- and grade-mates throughout the school years. Effective early childhood intervention is important because disadvantaged children are at significant risk for poor educational outcomes throughout the school years.**

The *Strengthening Head Start* report reviewed data from the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS–K), the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress and reported the following findings. While a number of specific conclusions are provided in the Report, the following two general trends are noteworthy:

A. Children with multiple risk factors (e.g., parents have not completed high school, low-income or welfare family, single parent family, parents speak a language other than English in the home) are at the greatest risk for educational failure.

B. The achievement gap persists into elementary and high school years. Data from the ECLS–K show that the gap for low-income children begins to close in kindergarten in very basic reading and mathematics skills such as letter recognition and counting, but the achievement gap widens for the more advanced reading and mathematics skills, such as recognizing words and adding and subtracting.

In summary, data from several sources converge to show that achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children that are evident during the pre-kindergarten years continue to characterize disadvantaged children in kindergarten and throughout elementary school. It is critical that we better understand the conditions under which programs have a real opportunity to close these gaps and implement them at the earliest possible time.

4. **Fragmented service delivery hinders improvements in Head Start and other early childhood programs.** At both the Federal and State levels, the early childhood services are characterized by multiple funding sources and requirements—each with different rules and standards, eligibility requirements, and desired child and family outcomes.

In a report published in 2000, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) found 69 Federal programs, administered by nine different Federal agencies and departments, funding early education and/or child care for youngsters under age 5. The GAO noted that when multiple agencies manage multiple early childhood education and care programs, mission fragmentation and program overlap can occur. This in turn creates the potential for BOTH duplication and service gaps. Although GAO pointed out that duplication can sometimes be necessary, fragmentation and overlap can also create an environment in which programs do not serve participants as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Reports from parents, providers, and State program administrators underscore how a lack of program coordination undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of early childhood programs. Parents report that a poorly coordinated system makes it difficult for them to find good quality care for their children. They are put in a position to try to determine which programs best suit their needs, and then go through the application and eligibility determination process for each program separately. Some programs, including Head Start, may only be offered in the parent's neighborhood for part of the day or year, while the parent needs a full day/year program because of their work responsibilities. If the local Head Start program does not collaborate with other local child care programs, parents are forced to cobble to-

gether various arrangements to ensure adequate care for the necessary length of time.

From the provider's perspective, the lack of program coordination forces them to juggle different eligibility requirements for children and families, different methods of receiving subsidies or other State or Federal funds, and different requirements and standards for the programs they provide. In addition, different early childhood programs typically require different credentials for teachers and providers, and offer a range of salaries and benefits, making it difficult for providers in a community to view themselves as part of a comprehensive system. In fact, differences in salaries and benefits may have the unintended effect of drawing the most qualified providers to some programs rather than others—for example, toward teaching in pre-kindergarten school-based programs rather than in a Head Start program or infant and toddler care. Lack of coordination also affects health and social service providers who must struggle to serve patients and clients who do not have a single point of entry into the system and who have a variety of needs that must be met.

From the perspective of State administrators, programs can be both inefficient and ineffective when States must juggle funding, enrollment, eligibility and other concerns for multiple programs administered by different Federal agencies. States are held responsible by the public for the care and education of young children, but lack power and control to create a seamless system and to provide access to all eligible families. Lack of coordination significantly complicates State efforts to engage in strategic and fiscal planning. Key stakeholders may have competing priorities and objectives and have difficulty agreeing on how best to meet the needs of the community. Instead of collaboration, there may be competition at the State level for scarce resources. Finally, States are aware that they will be held responsible for student performance in elementary school through the No Child Left Behind Act, and want to make sure that all children in the State enter kindergarten ready to learn. However, a fragmented system makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a State to provide the needed comprehensive services to all children from low-income homes who will begin kindergarten in the public schools.

This uncoordinated approach to service delivery significantly impedes providing effective early childhood programs that are successful in preparing at-risk children for school. To be sure there are many complex barriers to achieving coherence and coordination across early childhood programs and many of these are identified in the *Strengthening Head Start* report.

We Can Do Better Than We Are Doing

As pointed out earlier, converging evidence indicates strongly that young children who are provided frequent, systematic, positive interactions with adults and other children to foster the development of social, emotional and cognitive capabilities in an integrated fashion are FAR more likely to succeed in school than children who are in lower quality and less stimulating programs. The HHS *Strengthening Head Start* report submitted with this testimony and the Proceedings from the White House Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development convened by Mrs. Bush summarize the critical foundational skills that children must have to succeed in school. In brief, research tells us that if language, literacy, and other cognitive factors are attended to through high quality programming in early childhood settings, children's school readiness can be significantly improved. In the pre-kindergarten years, research describes three key components of high quality programs for reading and academic success. These include a strong foundation in: (1) language development; (2) early literacy (phonological awareness, letter knowledge, written expression, book and print awareness, motivation to read); and (3) early math (number and operations).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is critical that early childhood programs including Head Start provide a genuinely comprehensive set of services and educational opportunities to all children, including those with disabilities, that are grounded in developmental science. It is imperative that children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth be fostered on the basis of what developmental science tells us about what preschool children can learn, what they need to learn to succeed in school, and how learning is most optimally supported. For too long, our understanding, development, and implementation of preschool programs have been based on philosophical beliefs, untested assumptions, or out-of-date science. This practice has left many children behind. The NICHD, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (ACYF, ACF, ASPE) has developed a comprehensive research program to develop and evaluate comprehensive early childhood programs that combine

interactions to enhance cognitive, social and emotional abilities in children at risk for developmental difficulties and school failure. But we now know enough at this time to develop and implement preschool curricula that are effective as described in this testimony. Standards should be developed to reflect the need for preschool curricula to stimulate verbal interaction, enrich children's vocabularies, encourage talk about books, develop knowledge about print, generate familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, math and science, and appreciate the needs of children with disabilities and children acquiring English as a second language.

2. It is clear that we must develop a comprehensive assessment and reporting system to ensure that Head Start programs produce the positive outcomes that we know are achievable. This reporting system will, for the first time ever in the history of Head Start, provide outcome data on all Head Start programs and children, with and without disabilities, and thus help to identify areas in need of continued improvement, as well as to document systematically Head Start's successes. Note that all of the high quality demonstration projects that have produced large and lasting benefits for children and their families have involved systematic assessment and reporting about both the program quality and the children's development. High quality programs that endorse continuous quality improvement welcome assessment. We owe it to the parents of Head Start to assess their children's progress on a regular basis, in ways that will help guide the instruction and support Head Start. And children are not stressed or frightened by the assessment; they have fun in a one-to-one interaction with a responsive adult who is allowing them to demonstrate their skills and mastery.

3. We must ensure that our youngest children are learning from teachers who are highly competent in their ability to help children develop social competencies, emotional health, and the cognitive, language, literacy and mathematics concepts critical to school success. Numerous studies have shown that program quality and the benefits to children, with and without disabilities, are inextricably linked with staff educational background and training. The significant benefits to children provided by the Chicago CPC program and the CIRCLE program described in the HHS *Strengthening Head Start* report underscore this point. All preschool teachers in the CPC program had college degrees and certification in early childhood. While the teachers in the CIRCLE program ranged in education from high school degree through graduate degrees, the systematic training, mentoring, and follow-up training produced many teachers of high quality.

4. It is essential that preschool programs be coordinated with programs providing early care and education as well as with the curriculum framework and goals of kindergarten and early public school programs. Moreover, greater coordination and collaboration are needed between State and Federal programs to ensure that all children entering kindergarten are ready to learn. The value of a highly coordinated series of programmatic interactions from age 3 through the early grade-school years can be seen in the results produced by the Chicago CPC program. The fact that the CPC program is provided through the Chicago public schools provides a continuity in children's learning environments as well as appropriate levels of compensation for teachers and staff. Other communities have developed alternative models for coordination that include programs located outside the public school system.

5. While many Head Start programs need to be strengthened to ensure high quality interactions to support and develop physical (health) social, emotional, and cognitive strengths in an integrated and accountable fashion, it is clear that many States do have such high quality programs in place. It will be critical to identify these programs that are beacons of light and expand and build on them with both local and State funding. It will also be critical to identify low-performing programs and provide the necessary technical assistance to strengthen them but, in the end, to ensure that the health and development of our children are the priorities, not the survival of ineffective programs.

Thank you very much for providing me the opportunity to discuss these issues with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARNIE S. SHAUL

EDUCATION AND CARE

Head Start Key Among Array of Early Childhood Programs, But National Research on Effectiveness Not Completed

Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal Government invests over $11 billion in early childhood education and care programs. These programs exist to ensure that children from low-income families are better prepared to enter school and that their parents have access to early

childhood education and care that allow them to obtain and maintain employment. The Federal Government invests more in Head Start, which was funded at $6.5 billion in fiscal year 2002, than any other early childhood education and care program. Head Start has served over 21 million children at a total cost of $66 billion since it began. The Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions asked GAO to discuss Head Start—how it fits within the array of early childhood education and care programs available to low-income children and their families and what is known about its effectiveness.

WHAT GAO FOUND

Head Start, created in 1965, is the largest funded program among an array of Federal early childhood education and care programs, most of which did not exist until decades later. The early education and child care demands of families have changed significantly since Head Start's inception. More women are working, the number of single parents has been increasing, and welfare reform has resulted in more families, including those with young children, entering the workforce. To help meet families' demands for early childhood education and care services, an array of Federal programs, such as the child care block grant, have been added over time. Program legislation requires some of these programs to coordinate the delivery of early childhood education and care services for low-income families with young children. For example, to provide parents with full day coverage, Head Start, a predominately part day program, may coordinate with child care programs for the other part of the day. However, barriers—such as differing program eligibility requirements—sometimes make it difficult to blend services across the different programs.

Although extensive research exists that provides important information about Head Start, no recent, definitive, national-level research exists about Head Start's effectiveness on the lives of the children and families it serves. In its last reauthorization, Congress mandated a Head Start effectiveness study and specified that it be completed this year. According to HHS, the study will be completed in 2006.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to discuss our work on early childhood education and care programs, and in particular, Head Start, which many view as one of the most successful social programs. Nationwide attention has been focused on ensuring that children from low-income families are better prepared to enter school and that parents have access to early childhood services that allow them to obtain and maintain employment. In response, the Federal Government has increased funding for early childhood education and care programs to over $11 billion. Head Start—the Federal Government's single largest investment in early childhood education and care for low-income children—has served over 21 million children and their families at a total cost of $66 billion since its inception in 1965; its funding for fiscal year 2002 was $6.5 billion.

The reauthorization of the Head Start program offers a timely occasion for considering the two major issues my statement will address today: How Head Start fits into the array of early childhood education and care programs available to low-income children and their families and what is known about Head Start's effectiveness. My statement is based primarily on recent studies that we have conducted on early childhood education and care programs.

In summary, much has changed in society since Head Start was established nearly 40 years ago, including an increase in the availability of Federal early childhood programs for low-income families. Changes in women's employment, family structure, and public assistance have dramatically increased the demand for early education and child care for low-income families. To help meet the increased demand brought about by societal changes, an array of Federal education and care programs, as well as many State and local community programs, has been created for children from low-income families. The largest sources of additional Federal funding for child care services come from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). To meet the demands of families, some Federal programs require coordination of services among early childhood education and care programs. To illustrate, most Head Start programs are predominately part day, part year programs, and they cannot meet the demands of working families who need full-day, full-year education and care services. In response to this requirement, some Head Start programs collaborate with other programs to provide families full day coverage. However, differing program eligibility requirements and other coordination barriers sometimes impede coordination efforts.

Although a substantial body of Head Start research exists that provides important information about the program, little is known about its effectiveness on the lives of the children and families it serves. Although the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) currently has studies that show that the skills of children

who participate in Head Start have improved, the studies do not provide definitive evidence that this improvement is a result of program participation and not other experiences children may have had. HHS has a study underway, however, that is expected to provide more definitive information on Head Start's effectiveness in preparing young children for school. The study, mandated by Congress to have been completed this year, is expected to be completed in 2006, according to HHS. Currently, no preliminary results are available.

BACKGROUND

Head Start was created in 1965 as part of the "War on Poverty." The program was built on the premise that effective intervention in the lives of children could be best accomplished through family and community involvement. Fundamental to this notion was that communities should be given considerable latitude to develop their own Head Start programs. Head Start's primary goal is to prepare young children to enter school. In support of its school readiness goal, the program offers children a broad range of services, which include educational, as well as medical, dental, mental health, nutritional, and social services. Children enrolled in Head Start are primarily 3 and 4 years old and come from varying ethnic and racial backgrounds. Most children receive part day, part year program services in center-based settings.

Head Start is administered by HHS. Unlike most other Federal early childhood education and care programs that are funded through the States, HHS awards Head Start grants directly to local grantees. Grantees may contract with organizations—called delegate agencies—in the community to run all or part of their local Head Start programs.

ARRAY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROGRAMS EXISTS TO HELP MEET INCREASED DEMAND

Families' needs for early childhood education and care have changed dramatically since Head Start's inception, and to meet the increased demand, the Federal Government has created an array of Federal early education and care programs. Many of these programs are required to coordinate the delivery of services to low-income families with children. However, barriers sometimes exist, making it difficult to blend the services offered across programs to meet the demands of families.

INCREASED DEMAND FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES HAS LED TO AN INCREASE IN THE SIZE AND NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

Since Head Start was created in 1965, it has provided a wide range of services, through part day, part-year programs, to improve outcomes for children from low-income families. However, the demographics of families have changed considerably over the past several decades and increasingly, families need full-day, full-year services for their children. More parents are working full time, either by choice or necessity, and the proportion of children under age 6 who live with only one parent has increased. Moreover, welfare reform has meant that more families, including those with very young children, are expected to seek and keep jobs than ever before.

To help meet the demand for early education and care, the Federal Government has increased the number of, and funding for, programs providing early education and care services. For example, Head Start program funding has tripled over the past decade. Moreover, the Federal Government invests over $11 billion in early education and care programs for children under age 5, primarily through six major programs, including Head Start (see table 1). These programs are funded through HHS and the Department of Education. While these six programs receive most of the Federal funding for early childhood education and care, many other smaller programs also fund services for low-income families with children.[1] Funding under these six programs can generally be used to provide a range of services: early education and care; health, dental, mental health, social, parental, and nutritional services; speech and hearing assessments; and disability screening.

[1] GAO analysis of Department of Education and HHS data using proportions based on analysis in U.S. General Accounting Office, *Early Education and Care: Overlap Indicates Need to Assess Crosscutting Programs*, GAO/HEHS–00–78 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 28, 2000).

Table 1: Characteristics of the Six Major Federal Programs Supporting Early Childhood Education and Care

Program	Agency	Program goals	Estimated number of children served under age 5	Estimated amount spent for children under 5 (in billions)
Head Start[a]	HHS	Promote school readiness	912,000	$6.5
CCDF	HHS	Increase the availability, affordability and quality of child care services	1,260,000	$2.2
TANF	HHS	Provide assistance for needy families; end dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families	350,000	$1.3[b]
Special Education—Preschool Grants (IDEA)	Education	Ensure that children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education	316,000	$0.206
Title I (preschool programs)	Education	Ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state standards and academic assessments	313,000	$0.407
Even Start	Education	Improve the educational opportunities of low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program	25,500	[c]

Sources: Programs' legislation and regulation.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, number of children and funding for them are fiscal year 1999 estimates as determined through our survey. With the exception of Head Start, these are the most recent data available estimating the number of children under age 5 served.

[a]Number of children based on fiscal year 2002 data and funding reflects 2002 appropriation.

[b]May include funds expended directly on child care and transferred to CCDF.

[c]Estimate of the amount spent on children under age 5 is not available.

All of the programs—with the exception of IDEA—specifically target low-income children and their families, though they may actually serve different populations and age ranges of children. For example, Even Start programs serve a larger percentage of Hispanic children and a broader age range of children than Head Start.[2] Moreover, some programs differ in their goals. The primary goal of early childhood education programs such as Head Start, Even Start, and Title I, is to prepare young children to enter school. In contrast, a primary goal of child care programs, such as CCDF is to subsidize the cost of care for low-income parents who are working or engaged in education and training activities. In addition, States have the flexibility to use block grant funds to subsidize child care as States pursue one of the key TANF goals—promoting employment for low—income adults with families.

In addition to Federal programs that support services for poor children, many State and local community programs also offer education and care services for low-income families.[3] The majority of States, 39, fund preschool programs. Moreover, some States provide funding to supplement Head Start and fund child care programs.

HEAD START AND OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS REPORT SERVICE COORDINATION, BUT BARRIERS TO COORDINATION EXIST

To better ensure that low-income families and their children can access the services provided through the myriad Federal programs, Congress mandated that some programs coordinate with one another to deliver services to low-income families and their children. As a result, program officials have reported collaborative efforts with one another to deliver services; however, barriers still remain.

Head Start programs are required by law to coordinate and collaborate with programs serving the same children and families, including CCDF, Even Start, IDEA, and other early childhood programs. Similarly, CCDF agencies are required to coordinate funding with other Federal, State, and local early childhood education and care programs. To promote more integrated service delivery systems and to encourage collaboration between Head Start and other programs that fund early childhood services, HHS began awarding collaboration grants to States in 1990. In fiscal year 2002, Head Start provided $8 million to States to support collaborative activities. Moreover, in awarding program expansion funds, Head Start has given priority to funding first those Head Start programs that coordinate with other child care and

[2] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Head Start and Even Start: Greater Collaboration Needed on Measures of Adult Education and Literacy*, GAO–02–348 (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2002).

[3] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Education and Care: Early Childhood Programs and Services for Low-Income Families*, GAO/HEHS–00–11 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 1999).

early childhood funding sources to increase the number of hours children receive early education and care.

Positive outcomes have occurred as a result of early childhood education and care program collaboration, enabling some States to expand the options for low-income families with children. For example, Head Start and CCDF officials reported pooling resources by sharing staff to add full day care to the half-day Head Start program and to add Head Start services, such as nutrition and medical care, to day care programs. At the local level, about 74 percent of Even Start grantees reported that they collaborated with Head Start in some way, including cash funding, instructional or administrative support, technical assistance, and space or job training support.[4]

However, collaboration does not eliminate all gaps in care, and sometimes barriers, such as differing eligibility requirements, program standards, and different locations of programs, hinder collaboration. For example, program officials in one State said that the differing eligibility requirements between CCDF and Head Start made collaboration difficult. CCDF funds may be used for families with incomes up to 85 percent of State median income, which generally allows the States to give subsidies to families whose income is higher than the Federal poverty level.[5] Head Start's income eligibility standard requires that 90 percent of enrollments be from families at or below the Federal poverty level or from families eligible for public assistance. Thus, collaboration between these programs to achieve objectives might be difficult because some children may be eligible only for CCDF.

EFFECTIVENESS STUDY UNDERWAY TO DETERMINE WHETHER HEAD START MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Although an extensive body of Head Start research exists that provides important information about the program, no definitive, national-level research exists on the effectiveness of Head Start for the families and children it serves, prompting Congress to mandate such a study when it reauthorized the program in 1998. HHS has other studies underway that provide important information about the progress of children enrolled in the program; however, these studies were not designed to separate the effects of children's participation in Head Start from other experiences these children may have had. Although obtaining information about Head Start's effectiveness is difficult, the significance of Head Start and the sizeable investment in it warrant conducting studies that will provide answers to questions about whether the program is malting a difference.

In 1998, we testified that the body of research on Head Start though extensive, was insufficient for drawing conclusions about the program as a whole and recommended that HHS undertake a study of Head Start's effectiveness.[6] In reauthorizing Head Start in 1998, Congress mandated such a study. The law mandated that the study be completed in 2003 and was very specific in detailing the kind of study HHS was to undertake. Specifically, Congress required that the study use rigorous methodological designs and techniques to determine if Head Start programs are having an impact on children's readiness for school. The mandated study addresses two questions: (1) what difference does Head Start make to key outcomes of development and learning for low-income children and (2) under which conditions does Head Start work best and for which children?

The study is using a rigorous methodology that many researchers consider to be the most definitive method of determining a program's effect on its participants when factors other than the program are known to affect outcomes.[7] This methodology is referred to as an "experimental design" in which groups of children are randomly assigned either to a group that will receive program services or to a group that will not receive program services. This approach produces information that is more likely to show the effect of the program being studied, rather than the effects of other developmental influences on young children (see fig. 1).

The Head Start study is a $28.3 million national impact evaluation that follows participants over time. The study has two phases. The first phase, a pilot study designed to test various procedures and methods, was conducted in 2001. The second

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[4] GAO–02–348.

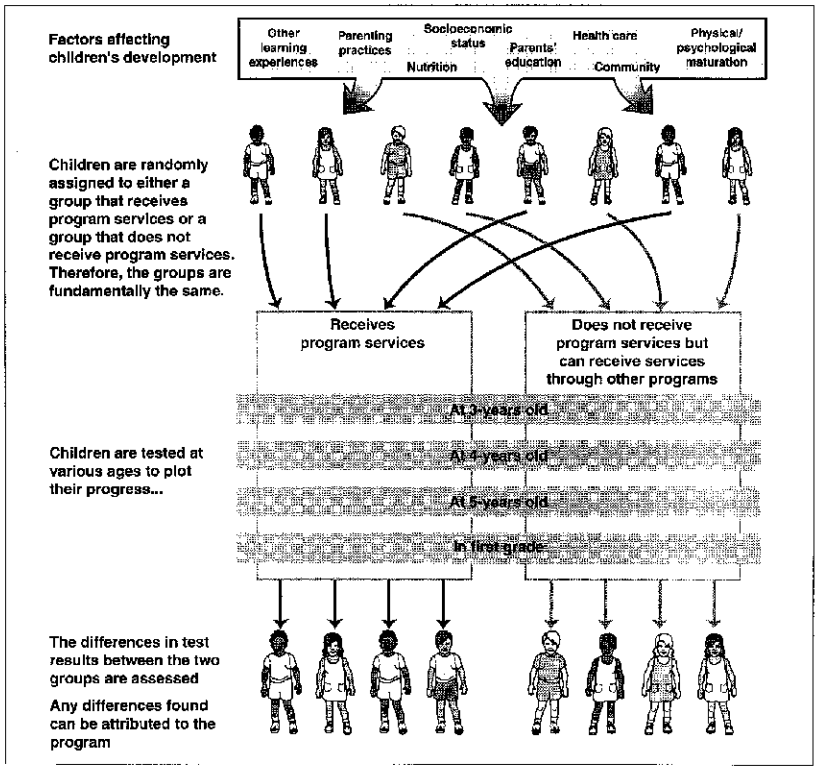
[5] In fiscal year 2000, the Federal poverty guideline was $17,050 for a family of four while the State median income ranged from a low of $24,694 for West Virginia households to a high of $43,941 in Maryland in 2000. States have the flexibility to set income eligibility limits up to 85 percent, but generally set them lower.

[6] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Head Start: Challenges Faced in Demonstrating Program Results and Responding to Societal Changes*, GAO/T–HEHS–98–183. (Washington, D.C.: June 9, 1998).

[7] U.S. General Accounting Office, Early Childhood Programs: The Use of Impact Evaluations to Assess Program Effects, GAO–01–542 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 16, 2001.

phase began in the fall of 2002 and entails data collection on 5,000 to 6,000 3- and 4-year-olds from 75 programs and communities across the country. The study will track subjects through the spring of their first grade year. An interim report, scheduled to be released in September of this year, will describe the study's design and methodology and the status of the data collection; it will not contain findings. Although Congress required that the study be completed in 2003, HHS reports that the study will be completed in 2006. This study is a complex, multiyear, longitudinal study and considerable attention had to be given to both study planning and execution. According to HHS, many aspects of the study needed to be pilot tested before the larger study could begin.

Figure 1: Experimental Design for Early Childhood Program Impact Evaluations



Source: GAO visual rendition based on requirements of experimental impact evaluations

In another effort, Head Start is collecting outcome data on a nationally representative sample of Head Start children and families as part of its Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES). FACES is an ongoing, longitudinal study of Head Start programs that uses a national sample of 3,200 children. FACES provides national data on Head Start child outcomes, family involvement, and key aspects of program quality and teaching practices. New findings from FACES research published in 2003 show that children enrolled in Head Start demonstrated progress in early literacy and social skills; however, their overall performance levels when they left Head Start was below that of children nationally in terms of school readiness.[8] This study, however, was not designed to provide definitive data about whether the initial gains children made in early literacy and social skills resulted from their participation in Head Start or some other experiences children may have had.

[8] Department of Health and Human Services, *Head Start FACES 2000: A Whole-Child Perspective on Program Performance*, 2003.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you or other Committee Members may have.

GAO CONTACT AND STAFF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For further information regarding this testimony, please call Marnie S. Shaul, Director, at (202) 512–7215. Individuals making key contributions to this testimony include Sherri Doughty and Harriet Ganson.

RELATED GAO PRODUCTS

Child Care: Recent State Policy Changes Affecting the Availability of Assistance for Low-Income Families. GAO–03–588. Washington, D.C.: May 5, 2003.

Head Start and Even Start: Greater Collaboration Needed on Measures of Adult Education and Literacy. GAO–02–348. Washington, D.C.: March 29, 2002.

Title I Preschool Education: More Children Served but Gauging Effect on School Readiness Difficult. GAO/HEHS–00–171. Washington, D.C.: September 20, 2000.

Early Childhood Programs: Characteristics Affect the Availability of School Readiness Information. GAO/HEHS–00–38. Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2000.

Early Childhood Programs: The Use of Impact Evaluations to Assess Program Effects, GAO–01–542. Washington, D.C.: April 16, 2001.

Education and Care: Early Childhood Programs and Services for Low-Income Families. GAO/HEHS–00–11. Washington, D.C: Nov. 15, 1999.

Early Education and Care: Overlap Indicates Need to Assess Crosscutting Programs. GAO/HEHS–00–78. Washington, D.C.: April 28, 2000.

Head Start: Challenges Faced In Demonstrating Program Results and Responding to Societal Changes. GAO/T–HEHS–98–183. Washington, D.C.: Jun. 9, 1988.

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U.S. General Accounting Office, Head Start Programs: Participant Characteristics, Services, and Funding. GAO/HEHS–98–65. Washington, D. C.: March 31, 1998.

Head Start: Research Provides Little Information on Impact of Current Program. GAO/HEHS–97–59. Washington, D.C.: April 15, 1997.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO—03–840T. To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Marnie S. Shaul at (202) 512–7215 or shaulm@gao.gov.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANIS SANTOS

Chairman Gregg, Ranking Member Kennedy and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today on behalf of the thousands of successful Head Start programs across the country and to offer the views of the National Head Start Association (NHSA)[1] on how best to continue to improve Head Start for the more than 900,000 low-income children who rely every day on this program for their health, nutrition and cognitive development.

Mr. Chairman, for nearly 40 years, Members of Congress and administration officials have worked side-by-side with the Head Start community to identify an agenda for improvement so that Head Start could meet the evolving challenges facing the program. We are deeply saddened that, for the first time in the program's history, a reauthorization bill may pass the House of Representatives on a straight party line vote. We are heartened to read your comments that this body will work on a bipartisan basis to ensure that Head Start continues to be a quality program delivered to at-risk children across the country.

As the Executive Director of the Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start program for 24 years, I have dedicated almost my entire adult life working to ensure that Head Start continues to provide high quality, comprehensive services to the poorest children in my community; that we work collaboratively with other early childhood programs in the State and with the public school system; and that the program applies the best thinking in early childhood research in our work with children.

[1] The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is a private not-for-profit membership organization dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of Head Start children and their families. The Association provides support for the entire Head Start family by advocating for policies which provide high quality services to children and their families; by providing extensive training and professional development services to all Head Start staff; and by developing and disseminating research, information, and resources that impact Head Start program delivery. NHSA represents more than 900,000 children and their families, 200,000 staff and 2,500 Head Start programs in America

I can tell you from first hand experience that Head Start does not shy away from change—we embrace it. In fact, Head Start has seized every opportunity to improve the services it provides for children and families. We also know that this is not the time to inject chaos and upheaval into Head Start by turning it over to even a limited number of States. As State budgets are cut and services are scaled back, we need Head Start now, more than ever before, as a stabilizing early childhood force in poor communities. Any improvements to the program easily can be accommodated within the existing structure of the Head Start program.

NHSA is confident that any objective assessment of Head Start will conclude what we ourselves have determined: Head Start provides real and meaningful benefits, sustained over time, for our nation's neediest children and families. At the same time, there clearly are ways to make Head Start better and NHSA is prepared to work with the Senate to ensure that this nearly 40-year-old program continues to grow and improve. In this reauthorization, Congress should once again affirm the success of this national treasure and expand the program's benefits to every poor child and family across the nation.

THE HEAD START SUCCESS STORY

For more than 38 years, Head Start has been a beacon of hope for low-income children and families. Its mission is straight forward: to prepare children to succeed in school and to give them the tools necessary to achieve their goals in life. There is abundant evidence suggesting that Head Start has been successful in meeting its mission.

This success is rooted in its design, which recognizes that at-risk children need comprehensive services in order to become "school ready." The program offers an array of services, with a strong emphasis on pre-reading skills, mental and physical health services, immunizations and nutrition services.[2] We know that preparing children to learn is about more than just teaching letters and numbers. Head Start aims to give children the skills and abilities that will serve them throughout their school careers—curiosity, an interest in learning, and the ability to pay attention in class.

Importantly, though Head Start generally is thought of as a program that primarily serves children, it actually is a program that serves families. Visit a Head Start center and you will see parents reading to children, participating on policy councils, taking part in family literacy training, or even studying for their GED. It is the comprehensive nature of the services offered and the focus on the whole family that distinguishes Head Start from more traditional early childhood programs and explains its success.

The key to quality in Head Start are the program performance standards that spell out what programs need to do to ensure that Head Start children meet the high expectations Congress has set for them. These performance standards govern the range, quality and intensity of Head Start's comprehensive educational, health, nutrition, family support, and parental involvement. Head Start has created a proven formula for high quality services and developed a system to ensure that programs deliver the quality services that Congress, parents and the community expect.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH CONCLUDES THAT HEAD START WORKS

Head Start is one of the most studied and evaluated early childhood programs in America. The collective wisdom of these studies is inescapable: Head Start delivers what it promises to this nation's neediest children—a head start in preparing them for school and life.

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[2] The Head Start Program Information Report for the 2001–2002 Program Year shows that Head Start programs have been providing important comprehensive services to children and families. In Head Start and Early Head Start: 866,005 children had a medical screening; 871,937 children were up-to-date on all their immunizations; 131,873 children were served by a mental health professional; 139,848 families received emergency or crisis services; 31,908 children were treated for anemia; 47,280 children were treated for asthma; 20,260 children were treated for hearing difficulties; 39,681 children were treated for being overweight; and 25,869 children were treated for vision problems. In Head Start, 783,861 Head Start children had a dental examination, and 75,279 children were diagnosed as having speech or language impairments. In Early Head Start, 38,805 children had a dental screening; 2,452 pregnant women received dental examinations and/or treatments; 7,213 pregnant women received prenatal and postpartum health care; and 7,121 pregnant women received prenatal education on fetal development. See Head Start Program Information Report for the 2001–2002 Program Year. (2003, June 3). National Level Summary Report, 5.

Recent research findings from a rigorous and randomized longitudinal study of Head Start graduates and their non-Head Start peers in San Bernardino, California found that for every $1 invested in these Head Start graduates, society receives nearly $9 in savings. These tremendous benefits include increased earnings, employment, and family stability and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition and special education. Dr. Meier summarized his new findings as follows: "The current comprehensive characteristics of the Head Start program and tested national performance standards constitute exemplary child-care program leadership and favorably impact the entire society's quality of preschool child nurturance and parent involvement. This all further emphasizes the necessity and affordability of a high quality preschool experience to prepare all of America's young citizens for successful school entry and subsequent achievement." [3]

Moreover, rigorous studies have found that, after leaving the program, children who attended Head Start are less likely to repeat a grade, to require special education classes, or to commit crimes than their non-Head Start peers.[4] Head Start graduates have also been found to be more likely to have higher achievement test scores, to complete high school and college and to earn more than their peers who did not have the benefit of a "head start." [5]

Importantly, both the most recent Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Head Start Monitoring Report and the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) have found that Head Start programs provide quality, comprehensive services to the children and families they serve and compare favorably with other studies of preschool and child care programs.[6] And, we expect the school readiness of Head Start students to show continued improvement in the FACES data as studies reflect the enhanced literacy and numeracy components added to the Head Start program in the late 1990s and fully implemented in 2000.

Launched in 1997, the FACES initiative is an ongoing, national, longitudinal study of the development of Head Start children and families, the characteristics of their families, and the quality of Head Start classrooms. FACES consists of two nationally stratified random samples. The 1997 sample consists of 3,200 children and families in 40 Head Start programs and the 2000 sample consists of 2,800 children and families in 43 different Head Start programs.[7]

Key findings of FACES reveal that:

- Head Start narrows the gap between Head Start children and the general population of preschool-age children during the Head Start program year on the key components of school readiness;
- Head Start children leave the program "ready to learn";
- Head Start children have increased their learning since the 1998 Head Start reauthorization as the children in the FACES 2000 cohort showed greater gains in book knowledge, letter recognition and print conventions than had the Head Start children in the 1997 FACES cohort; and
- Head Start children demonstrated a greater increase in vocabulary and early writing than the typical child during the 2000–2001 program year.

Despite these convincing results, some critics of the Head Start program insist that it is not doing enough to close the learning gap between Head Start children and their wealthier peers. It must be emphasized that we have the highest expectations for Head Start children and insist upon holding them to the highest possible standards. At the same time, we have reasonable expectations of what can be accomplished after just 1 or 2 years of Head Start. The objective of Head Start is to narrow the gap between Head Start children and their wealthier peers and to help poor children improve their preparation for school and learning. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, a scholar at Columbia University, concludes, "If policy makers believe that offering early childhood intervention for 2 years will permanently and totally reduce

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[3] Meier, J. (2003, June 20). Kindergarten Readiness Study: Head Start Success. Interim Report. Preschool Services Department of San Bernardino County.

[4] Barnett, W.S. (September 2002). The Battle Over Head Start: What the Research Shows; Garces, E.D. Thomas, and J. Currie (September 2002). Longer-Term Effects on Head Start.

[5] Id.

[6] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (January 2001). Head Start FACES: Longitudinal Findings on Program Performance. Third Progress Report, iv and 80; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2003, February 24). Report on Head Start Monitoring Fiscal Year 2000, 1.

[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003, May). Head Start FACES 2000: A Whole-Child Perspective on Program Performance, 2.

SES (socioeconomic status) disparities in children's achievement, they may be engaging in magical thinking."[8]

Nevertheless, seven prominent early childhood education and development scholars in a July 9, 2003 letter to members of Congress contend, ". . . what Head Start can do and what a recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report concludes it can do, is bolster children's school readiness."[9] Head Start children have shown that they are ready to learn by making progress in both the short- and long-term. In a recent study, during the school year Head Start children demonstrated increased scores in vocabulary, early writing and early mathematics.[10]

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION

Head Start remains as important today as it was 38 years ago, helping children in poverty get the learning opportunities, nutritious meals, health care and social and emotional support they need to enter school ready to learn. The founding principles of Head Start—that disadvantaged children need comprehensive, quality early education to start school ready to learn—are no less critical today than they were 38 years ago.

Despite the impressive accomplishments of Head Start, NHSA and the entire Head Start community are the first to acknowledge that we can do an even better job on behalf of this Nation's neediest children. In fact, throughout its history, Head Start has embraced change and has never shied away from the kind of critical assessments that have sparked the innovative and quality improvements central to the success of the program. NHSA recognizes that the program is a dynamic one that must constantly seek to improve services for children and their families. As such, in the 2003 reauthorization, NHSA has identified and is supporting a number of quality enhancements to the program, including those discussed below.

Enhance teacher qualifications. Although our teachers are well trained, motivated, and have many years of experience, we agree with those who want to continue improving the training of the teachers in the Head Start classroom. We understand the importance of teacher qualifications. We were the first to insist that all teachers have at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, which is an intensive training and assessment of knowledge and practice in early childhood education. We worked during the last reauthorization to ensure that at least 50 percent of all Head Start teachers have an associate degree or better by September 2003—a goal that already has been met. Today, we are pleased to support recommendations that call for a teacher with a bachelor's degree in every classroom, phased in over an 8 year period, and contingent upon additional and adequate funding that will allow programs to attract and retain such teachers. Specifically, NHSA believes that any new requirement for bachelor's degrees should take effect only if adequate and additional funding is available for current teachers to return to school to meet this requirement and for comparable pay once they have earned such a degree. Further, NHSA supports a requirement that at least 50 percent of teacher aides/assistants be required to have a CDA by 2008.

Require every Head Start program to have a career development plan for all staff. Many Head Start programs already have career development plans to ensure that all staff receive the training they need and want. Nonetheless, it would be helpful to require that all Head Start programs design career development plans for their staff so that they receive the necessary guidance to obtain degrees, training, and the specialized knowledge that will better enable them to better serve the needs of Head Start children and families.

Create a new training and technical assistance system. NHSA supports the creation of a new training and technical assistance system that would address the comprehensive nature of Head Start and focus on all the aspects of the Head Start program. This system should include coordination with State Head Start Associations and State preschool entities. This will not only ensure quality but improve the coordination between State preschool programs and Head Start. At a minimum, the training and technical assistance set aside must be maintained at a level of two percent or greater so we can continue to provide necessary professional development. Congress should mandate that at least 50 percent of these funds be directed to Head Start agencies to facilitate compliance with mandated program performance stand-

[8] Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). "Do You Believe in Magic? What We Can Expect From Early Childhood Intervention Programs." Social Policy Report. Society for Research in Child Development, 9.

[9] Letter from seven Early Childhood Education and Development Experts to Members of Congress. (2003 July, 9), 1.

[10] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003, May). Head Start FACES 2000: A Whole-Child Perspective on Program Performance, 11–17.

ards. The remaining 50 percent should be designated as follows: 60 percent for the national training and technical assistance system of State training offices and 40 percent for the administration of the national CDA credentialing system and other initiatives to assist programs in meeting the program performance standards. Congress should further insist that no funds appropriated for training and technical assistance be used for any purpose other than that stated in the authorizing language.

Strengthen collaboration and strategic State-level planning. As the organization that pushed for 50 collaboration grants, we understand the need for Head Start to coordinate with other Federal and State early care programs. NHSA supports provisions that will encourage collaboration and strategic State-level planning among Head Start, education and child care programs to deliver services that help children succeed in school while meeting the needs of parents. Congress also is called upon to provide additional funding that will help these State planning activities.

Increase the Early Head Start set-aside and develop a seamless program. More and more research has found that learning begins at an earlier age than once was thought to be the case. To address the needs of infants, the Early Head Start program was established. This successful program currently is serving children pre-natal to the age of 3. However, because of a lack of funding, it is estimated that the program has been able to serve only about three percent of eligible kids.[11] We believe it is time to make a serious commitment to providing seamless services to children pre-natal to the age of 5. To accomplish this goal, we propose that the Early Head Start set-aside be increased and that Head Start grantees be given the flexibility to provide services to children pre-natal to age 5.

Allow Head Start programs the flexibility to enroll more families above the income guidelines and to serve the working poor. Currently, Head Start mostly serves families earning at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. Right now, a family can be poor enough to receive Medicaid and Food Stamps but not be poor enough for Head Start. The Head Start Act allows programs to enroll 10 percent of their families earning above the poverty line. With the passage of welfare reform in 1996, many families that now are working find themselves slightly over the poverty line and thus ineligible for Head Start. To remedy this situation, NHSA proposes that Head Start programs be allowed to serve 25 percent of their families above the income guidelines. To ensure that the most deserving families are served first, safeguards should be put in place to ensure programs serve the neediest children before reaching beyond the poverty level.

Fully fund Head Start. Head Start has enough funding to serve about six out of every 10 income eligible children. Assuming that 8 out of 10 income eligible children would like to enroll in Head Start, it is estimated that 252,555 income eligible children were unable to enroll in Head Start during fiscal year 2003 because of a lack of funding.[12] Unfortunately, the administration's proposed funding increase of $148 million in fiscal year 2004 is not enough even to keep pace with inflation and provides no funds for quality improvements. Fully funding Head Start is not a question of money or resources; it is simply a question of priorities and values.

COMMENTS ON H.R. 2210

As noted above, the government's own research and independent studies reach the same conclusion: Head Start is a program that works. NHSA shares the president's desire to enhance the literacy and language components of Head Start, and to improve the coordination of Head Start with State preschool and child care programs. At the same time, it is our position that these goals can be met within the structure of the current program.

According to the sponsors of H.R. 2210, the School Readiness Act of 2003, the main goals of the legislation are to close the school readiness gap between young low-income children and other children upon entering school and to promote collaboration and alignment at the State level between Head Start and other early childhood education programs. We agree that these are important goals. However, they are unlikely to be achieved under H.R. 2210. Though there are positive aspects of the legislation, they are far outweighed by the provisions with which we have very serious concerns, and which we believe will undermine the program and lead to its dissolution.

Among our most serious concerns with H.R. 2210 are that it:

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[11] Head Start Bureau data; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census. (2001). Table 23. Single Years of Age—Poverty Status of People in 2001. Accessed at http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/pov /new23—001.htm on October 10, 2002.

[12] Head Start Bureau data; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census. (2001). Table 23. Single Years of Age—Poverty Status of People in 2001.

• Dismantles the national program by allowing eight States the option to receive Head Start funds in the form of a block grant without full application of the current Head Start Performance Standards, adequate accountability, or sufficient coordination requirements;

• Reduces the Federal commitment to training and technical assistance, a key to any strategy aimed at improving program quality; and

• Establishes a set of significant new goals for Head Start programs without providing the funding that would be needed to meet the goals.

It is not apparent to us how shifting Head Start to a block grant program to even eight States—without the full application of the program performance standards and without adequate accountability or sufficient coordination requirements—will do anything to improve the quality of Head Start. Instead, such a shift likely will result in chaos for the immediate future as cash-strapped States figure out how to use the funds. At the same time, sending Head Start dollars to the States will most assuredly lead to a dilution of the quality of Head Start. While bipartisan Congresses have sought to strengthen the program's performance standards and enhance monitoring requirements, the administration's plan would instead rely on the good will of debt-ridden States to ensure quality.

While Head Start provides low-income children and families with high quality and comprehensive services, there is no guarantee these standards or services will be maintained if States are given control over the funding. Though we don't doubt the sincerity of the States' interest in early childhood development, we do know that the States vary considerably in the services they provide in their early childhood programs. Further, a State's commitment to providing quality prekindergarten services can be subject to changing priorities among administrations and budget constraints.

NHSA hopes that Congress will take steps to improve the quality of the literacy and language skills training in Head Start programs, rather than diverting resources, time, and focus to an untested idea. Literacy and language skills training have been part of the mission of the program since its inception, and we will work closely with Members of the Committee and this Congress to raise the bar for our Nation's most vulnerable children. It is our hope, however, that this goal can be accomplished without dismantling or weakening the comprehensive components of Head Start that are so critical for preparing children to succeed in school and to develop strong literacy skills.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMY WILKINS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am honored to join today's panel to discuss the reauthorization of Head Start.

My name is Amy Wilkins. I am the Executive Director of the Trust for Early Education (TEE). TEE was established in 2002 to promote high quality, voluntary prekindergarten programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

While the school readiness problem is most acute for low-income children and children of color, large percentages of middle income and white children are entering school without the skills they need to do their best. In fact, we know that children who recognize their letters before entering kindergarten become stronger readers sooner than children who do not. We also know that about one-quarter of white children and about one-third of middle class children enter kindergarten without knowing their letters. More startling, perhaps, is data published last Fall by the Economic Policy Institute, which indicates that the math and reading skill levels of children from families in the middle socio-economic status (SES) quintile are closer to the skill levels of children in the lowest SES quintile—our very poorest children—than they are to the skill levels of children in the highest SES quintile.

The global economy is demanding ever higher levels of skill and knowledge from all of our citizens. Given this, TEE believes we must quickly and comprehensively address the school readiness issue faced by this nation and that the most effective response to the issue is high quality pre-kindergarten for all.

TEE works at both the State and Federal levels because we believe that it is neither possible nor desirable to build the system that will provide access to high quality pre-kindergarten to all children without strong coordination between Federal and State policies and funding.

In the last 13 months, TEE has distributed over $3 million in grants to advocates in nine States (Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Oklahoma) to help them advance the cause of high quality pre-kindergarten at the State level.

Our work at the Federal level has convinced us there is not only the need to coordinate Federal policy with State policy more closely, but also a need to better co-

ordinate policy between Federal programs and agencies. As you work on reauthorizing Head Start, it is critical that you coordinate these efforts with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which will soon come before you.

For more than three decades, Head Start has provided pre-kindergarten for children living in poverty. The program has, without question, achieved a great deal of success. The Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) data from both 1999–98 and 2000–2001 suggest that a year of Head Start boosts children's knowledge and skills, and narrows the school entry skills gap between them and more affluent children.

Head Start has provided millions of our most vulnerable children a foundation of integrated health, nutrition, academic and family support services. Nonetheless, when Head Start children enter kindergarten, a gap remains.

Our paramount goal for this reauthorization of Head Start should be to improve Head Start in order to narrow the gap even more. As this Committee considers the many issues which will arise during this reauthorization we urge you to evaluate each policy choice with this goal in mind. We ask you to ask yourselves this question: "Is this policy likely to help narrow the school readiness gap?"

The President and many members of this Committee have noted that narrowing the gap will require that Head Start do more to promote strong language and literacy skills in the children it serves. We agree, but this still begs the question how best to do this. TEE believes that the single most important step that this Committee can take in this reauthorization to boost early literacy skills of Head Start children is to ensure that every Head Start classroom is staffed by a lead teacher who has at least a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early education. In fact, we believe that all the other steps that you may take to narrow the gap and to promote early literacy will amount to little without an increase in the percentage of well-educated Head Start teachers.

As important as it is for Head Start to do more to enhance the intellectual growth of children, it cannot be asked to do so by cutting back on other critical services that have demonstrable, positive impacts on school readiness. The health, nutrition, and family support services that Head Start provides are the foundation of its success and must not be compromised. The truism that children who are hungry or sick cannot learn has and should continue to guide Head Start policy. It is equally true that well-fed, healthy children who are not well taught cannot learn either. We cannot sacrifice one aspect of children's development to promote another.

BETTER QUALIFIED TEACHERS LEAD TO BETTER OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Well-educated teachers improve the quality of pre-kindergarten programs by building strong academic skills in children and promoting positive social and emotional development. Research indicates that literate, engaged, and attentive teachers—teachers with bachelor's degrees—help children learn and develop the knowledge and skills they need to do well in kindergarten and beyond.

Strong reading skills are the foundation for success in school and in life. Vocabulary is a critical building block for later literacy. Research shows that low-income 3-year-olds have vocabularies that are only about half the size of vocabularies of 3-year-olds living in our most affluent families. As a result, without powerful interventions to help build their vocabularies, low-income children have more difficulty than their more fortunate peers mastering basic reading skills.

Research has established a clear link between the number and complexity of words spoken by adults—including parents and teachers—and the number and complexity of words spoken by children. When children are exposed to larger vocabularies and more complex speech, they respond with greater comprehension and more complex speech themselves (Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, and Levine, 2002). It would seem then, that in order to boost vocabularies—and thereby lay the foundation for other early reading skills—we must provide Head Start children with highly literate teachers who themselves have rich and robust vocabularies.

An analysis by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) suggests that adults with bachelor's degrees have higher literacy levels than do adults with less formal education. Working with the data from The National Adult Literacy Survey, ETS finds that adults with only associate's degrees are twice as likely as those with bachelor's degrees to have literacy skills below the "competent" level. Therefore, requiring that Head Start teachers have bachelor's degrees—not just associate's degrees—will increase the chances that children in the program will experience richer, more complex speech, and be better able to build stronger vocabularies that are positively associated with later reading success.

The logic of this notion is supported by the findings of The National Child Care Staffing Study, which concluded that teachers with more formal education were

more sensitive than teachers with less formal education, and that children with more sensitive teachers received higher language scores than did children in classrooms with less educated teachers (Howes, Phillips & Whitebook 1992; Whitebook et al., 1990).

But well-educated teachers do more than simply build the framework for later literacy. They support strong social and emotional development in the children they teach. Three of the largest and most reliable studies of early education and care—The Cost Quality and Outcomes Study, The Florida Quality Improvement Study, and The National Child Care Staffing Study—each found very strong evidence of the positive impacts that teachers with bachelor's degrees have on overall classroom quality. These studies suggest that teachers with bachelor's degrees are:

- Less harsh, critical and punitive than teachers with less formal education;
- Less detached from their students than teachers without degrees; and
- More engaged with and attentive to their students than teachers with less formal education.

The studies also found that children in classrooms with teachers with bachelor's degrees engaged in more creative peer play than did children in classrooms with teachers with less formal education. Moreover, the studies demonstrated that children in classrooms with teachers with more formal education spent less time in "aimless wondering" than did children in classrooms with teachers with less formal education.

The findings of all of these studies are supported by what we know happens in good pre-kindergarten programs. The most powerful and renowned early childhood education programs for low-income children—the programs we all reference when extolling the benefits of pre-kindergarten for low-income children—such as the Perry Preschool Program, the Chicago Parent Child Parent Centers, and the Abecedarian Preschool Program are staffed by teachers with at least 4-year degrees. Children participating in these programs:

- Enter school better prepared to learn;
- Are less likely to be retained in grade;
- Are less likely to be placed in special education; and
- Are more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who have not had the benefit of such high quality programs.

If we want the same results from Head Start, we must staff Head Start with the same caliber of teachers employed by these exemplary programs.

Given all of the evidence suggesting that positive outcomes for children are strongly linked to the presence of well-educated teachers, it should come as no surprise that many of the most respected research institutions in the field of early childhood education, including: the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Institute for Early Education Research, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, support the notion of increasing the percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees in the Head Start program.

Staffing pre-kindergarten programs for low-income children with well-educated teachers is not a revolutionary policy. In fact, many States are ahead of the Federal Government in this area. Half of the States with pre-kindergarten programs already require that all of their teachers have 4-year college degrees. In an area as critical as the qualifications of the program's teaching force, Head Start cannot now lag behind the State programs that were established to emulate it.

WE CAN GET THERE

Even with solid research pointing to the need to put a teacher with a bachelor's degree in every Head Start classroom, there are some who say it cannot be done. They insist that asking the program to substantially ratchet up the quality of its teaching force may be desirable, but that it is unrealistic to ask for so great an improvement. TEE believes it can—with will, innovation, coordination and resources—be done. Consider the recent success of New Jersey.

In 1998, the New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled on a school finance equity case known as Abbott v. Burke. Part of the Court's decision required the State to establish high quality pre-kindergarten programs in the 30 highest poverty school districts in the State. The court later required that each of these programs be staffed by lead teachers with bachelor's degrees within 4 years. At the time of the court order about 35 percent of teachers in the pre-kindergarten programs in Abbott districts held bachelor's degrees. Today, about 80 percent of the teachers in these programs hold 4-year degrees and State certification. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers in the Abbott districts are already reporting that children are coming into their classrooms better prepared than in the past.

In order to raise teacher qualifications in accordance with the court order, the State created and executed a plan that included:

- Realistic but ambitious timelines;
- A strengthened and improved teacher education infrastructure;
- Scholarships, release time, and substitutes for teachers; and
- Improved teacher compensation and attempts to reach salary parity with kindergarten teachers.

Today, TEE and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey are releasing a paper on what it took for the State of New Jersey to meet the court mandate. The New Jersey experience provides important lessons that I hope this Committee will consider.

Not all of the steps that New Jersey has taken can be addressed through the Head Start bill, but this Committee also has jurisdiction over the approaching reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. By coordinating policy between the two bills and using the resources of Head Start and Titles II, III and IV of the Higher Education Act, the Committee can lay the foundation of a strong system that will make it possible not only for every Head Start classroom to have a lead teacher with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early education by 2011—but also to improve the qualifications of teachers working in all settings that serve 3- and 4-year-old children.

THE TRUST FOR EARLY EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

We strongly urge this Committee to require all Head Start teachers have bachelor's degrees with specialized training in early education within 8 years. The House's action on this issue, while significant and laudable, is limited. If, as a national average, only half of the teachers in Head Start are required to have a bachelor's degree, it is very possible that not a single State represented on this Committee would see any improvement in the number of teachers with bachelor's degrees.

While TEE is pleased that the House Committee has recognized the need to increase the percentage of well-educated teachers in Head Start, we call on the Senate to build on and expand on the work of the Education and Workforce Committee by both increasing the percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees in Head Start classrooms beyond the level established in the House bill and making the resources available to educate, attract and retain those teachers.

TEE has estimated the cost of providing Head Start teachers with scholarships and other supports needed to earn bachelor's degrees at about $1 billion. We have estimated the cost of appropriate increases in Head Start teacher salaries at about $6 billion over 8 years, with about $3 billion needed by the end of this reauthorization to put the program on a solid path to reach the final goal. Some may balk at theses costs; however, we believe that they are an indispensable investment in better school readiness outcomes for Head Start children.

In addition, TEE supports several other changes to the Head Start law to enhance the quality of the teaching force, including:

- Adding a requirement for annual center-by-center public reporting on the educational attainment of all teachers. This will help parents, the public, and Congress better monitor progress toward the important teacher education goal established by this bill.
- Amending the existing sections of the law which outline requirements for Head Start programs' salary scales to require that they relate directly to the level of teachers' formal education. It is entirely reasonable for the Federal Government to demand higher levels of formal education for Head Start teachers. However, as we demand more education from them we must compensate them at higher levels.

If we require that Head Start teachers have bachelor's degrees and specialized training in early education, we will be requiring that they meet essentially the same requirements that most States have established for their kindergarten teachers. As it currently stands, Head Start teachers with bachelor's degrees earn only half as much as public school kindergarten teachers. Without improved wages, Head Start teachers with bachelor's degrees will not stay in Head Start programs. In New Jersey, which experienced mixed success in raising compensation for degreed teachers, 17 Head Start centers lost 125 certified teachers in 3 years. Such high turnover will not only limit Head Start's ability to improve quality, but high turnover will also be detrimental to children's social and emotional development which depends, at least in part, on their ability to build long term trusting relationships with their teachers. Raising Head Start teacher salaries so that they are commensurate with those of kindergarten teachers with similar credentials will encourage the best teachers to stay in Head Start and will help attract a new, highly educated workforce of potential teachers for Head Start.

The issue here, however, is more than an issue of increased investment; it is also a question of coordinated policy between Federal programs. This Committee will undoubtedly spend a great deal of time discussing how Head Start programs can be coordinated with State pre-kindergarten programs. The Trust for Early Education is eager to participate in these discussions in order to help create a system that is dedicated to providing access to high quality pre-kindergarten to all children. But we would urge you to remember the need for coordination between Federal programs as well. The New Jersey success story is largely a story of coordinated effort. When this Committee takes up the Higher Education Act we recommend that you:

• Expand the use of Title II funds to cover the improvement, expansion and creation of post-secondary education programs for preparation of pre-kindergarten teachers as well as K–12 teachers as the House did in H.R. 2211;

• Expand the provision of Title II which provides loan forgiveness to K–12 teachers working in high-poverty schools to include teachers in Head Start and other pre-kindergarten programs serving low-income children.

• Attend to student aid policy that may make it difficult for Head Start teachers and other working adults to balance the demands of work, family and post-secondary education; and

• Encourage greater cooperation between 2- and 4-year colleges around the transfer of course credits.

CONCLUSION

Head Start has been successful for so long because it has evolved and incorporated the best research into its programs and practices. The single best way to continue to improve the quality of Head Start is to ensure that teachers with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early education lead each and every Head Start classroom. It is time to follow the best models and give Head Start children the best chance for success.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA®

Catholic Charities USA is a national network of 1,600 local Catholic Charities agencies and institutions working to reduce poverty, support families, and build communities throughout the United States. Catholic Charities programs serve over 10 million people of all religions—and no religion—and of every racial, ethnic, and social background. Catholic Charities agencies have operated Head Start sites since the program's inception in 1965 and currently serve over 20,000 children directly in Head Start programs. Catholic Charities agencies also serve hundreds of thousands of Head Start children and their families through other services such as wrap-around child-care, family counseling, job training and housing.

As the Senate prepares legislation, we would like to offer the following recommendations for maintaining and improving the quality of the Head Start program. These come from our 38 years of experience in running the Head Start program, as well as reaction to the "School Readiness Act of 2003" (H.R. 2210) that is pending in the House.

First, we support maintaining Head Start as a Federal program that directly funds local sponsoring organizations. It is hard to see what is to be gained by adding an additional State layer of governmental bureaucracy to Head Start, as is proposed in H.R. 2210. Local communities, including the parents of children in Head Start, are best able to discern what the children of that community need. Local faith-based organizations, community centers and schools that are known and trusted run many Head Start programs. Involving parents in the program is the hallmark of Head Start.

Head Start helps children succeed in school, not by just teaching children reading readiness, but also by strengthening their families and teaching parents so that they can then help teach their own children. For example, in the fall of 1979, Julia, a single mother of three, enrolled two of her three children in a Catholic Charities Head Start program located in a housing project in Cleveland. Julia had heard about the Head Start program from another Head Start parent at the laundry-mat. Julia was shy, introverted and somewhat non-responsive to the questions asked during the intake process, and the Family Service Worker had to repeat most of the questions. Julia seemed to lack confidence when questioned about goals for her family.

At first, Julia seldom volunteered in the classroom nor attended the monthly parent meetings, so Head Start staff made a series of home visits, which encouraged Julia to participate in parent activities at the Head Start center.

With the support of Head Start staff, Julia decided to enroll in adult education classes and earned her high school diploma. A Head Start Family Service Worker provided her tutoring, and Julia graduated from the program in 1981. She then began working for Head Start as a part-time Family Service Worker. It has been almost 26 years since Julia first walked into the Head Start center.

Julia now has a bachelor's degree in social work from a local university, supervises a staff of seven and has set a remarkable example for her own children. Julia is just one of many who have never forgotten the difference Head Start made in their lives and made them better parents.

We acknowledge and applaud the efforts of Congress to encourage partnerships between government and faith-based organizations. Nonetheless, faith-based organizations could encounter new obstacles to sponsorship of Head Start if Title II of the House bill, which would allow eight States to take over administration of the program, were to become law. Thirty-seven States have some version of the Blaine amendment in their constitutions or statutes that could prohibit contracts between their State departments of education—the likely State administering agencies—and religious organizations. Moreover, State education establishments are likely to view public schools and secular agencies, their traditional constituencies, as the natural choice for administering Head Start programs.

Even with a workable correction in this area, Catholic Charities USA has very serious concerns about giving States control of Head Start. State budget shortfalls are already forcing severe cuts in programs for children and families, including many States' own early childhood efforts. The current capacity of State Governments to exercise leadership and responsibility for Head Start is very questionable. States have already begun to make dramatic cuts in early childhood programs. For example, Ohio has lowered eligibility for child-care subsidies from 185 percent of the Federal poverty level to 165 percent of the Federal poverty level, and Massachusetts made a $10 million cut to their school readiness program. Additionally, State education departments are struggling to implement the "No Child Left Behind Act" without the promised increased in Federal funds. It is hard to see how the State "demonstration projects" would contribute more than another layer of bureaucracy.

One of the concerns of Congress is a lack of collaboration between Head Start programs and State educational programs. Our experience is that Head Start programs do collaborate with State educational programs, albeit sporadically. Fostering collaboration could be achieved without surrendering control over Head Start to the States. For example, Head Start grantees could be required to demonstrate in their applications how they will collaborate with pre-school and other early childhood programs. In addition, States could be required, as a condition of receiving Federal ESEA funding, to show how they coordinate and collaborate with Head Start programs.

The "School Readiness Act of 2003" raises further concerns and questions for us. While encouraging and rewarding Head Start programs for hiring teachers with Bachelor's degrees is a positive step, rapid implementation may be difficult.

- Head Start teachers currently are paid $21,000 annually on average.
- Once Head Start teachers have a degree, they will be recruited by public schools for elementary grade levels where they will receive pay better and have full benefits.

It is our hope that legislation proposed in the Senate will recognize the comprehensive nature of Head Start. Any reauthorization of Head Start should include a commitment to health and nutrition, social and cognitive development and services reducing or eliminating any barriers to a child's success in school. Head Start recognizes that a child is part of a family system. Family problems and challenges: loss of income, siblings with problems, violence at home or in the community, all affect the ability of a child to learn. For example, Jerry, a 4 year-old, who was enrolled in a Catholic Charities Head Start class, had a 15 year-old brother who was involved in a gang and had started skipping school, creating stress and conflict in Jerry's home. Jerry's Head Start teachers knew about the situation, because they could see the effects on Jerry who was misbehaving and unable to focus. The Head Start staff reached out to the family and offered resources to help Jerry's brother to get out of the gang and back into school. This intervention not only improved the home environment, but also provided Jerry and his brother an opportunity to succeed in school. It is unclear whether States would continue this highly effective and comprehensive approach to Head Start.

We would like to acknowledge the Department of Health and Human Services' hard work to improve the quality of Head Start by increasing accountability, increasing training and professional development, and integrating school readiness into the program since the last reauthorization. In addition, the agency has contin-

ued to prioritize the comprehensive services of health, nutrition, and social skills that make Head Start such a high quality program.

Catholic Charities USA supports a reauthorization of Head Start that improves upon, but remains consistent with the original design of the program, "to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs." We urge you to support a reauthorization that would:

- maintain the integrity of the Head Start Program;
- provide funding to serve all eligible children;
- increase resources to enhance literacy, numeracy and school readiness skills; and
- improve teacher training and professional development.

In addition, we support the proposal in H.R. 2210 to apply to the Head Start program the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which allows religious organizations to consider religion in employment decisions.

We encourage members of the Senate to rigorously examine the Head Start program so that low-income children may receive the best pre-school education available. However, we caution against any major "experimentation" with this successful program. These children only have 2 years to get ready for school. They will not get those years back if the experiment fails.

Your efforts to bring sufficient funding and enhanced quality to the reauthorization of the Head Start Program will afford many poor children ages 0-5 and their families an opportunity for a comprehensive early educational experience. Catholic Charities USA will be happy to continue working with you in this regard.

STATEMENT OF STANLEY B. PECK

INTRODUCTION

The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony regarding "Reauthorizing Head Start: Preparing Children to Succeed in School and in Life." ADHA applauds the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions for holding this important hearing on Head Start.

ADHA is the largest national organization representing the professional interests of the more than 120,000 dental hygienists across the country. Dental hygienists are preventive oral health professionals who are licensed in each of the fifty states. Dental hygienists across the country provide oral health services to Head Start children. Please visit ADHA's web site at < < www.adha.org > > .

As prevention specialists, dental hygienists understand that recognizing the connection between oral health and total health can prevent disease, treat problems while they are still manageable and conserve critical health care dollars. Dental hygienists are committed to improving the nation's oral health, an integral part of total health. Indeed, all Americans can enjoy good oral health because the principal oral maladies (caries, gingivitis and periodontitis) are fully preventable with the provision of regular preventive oral health services such as those provided by dental hygienists.

The Head Start program is designed to foster healthy development in low-income children and includes a program service area in health. According to the Head Start Bureau, "Wellness is recognized as a significant contributor to each child's ability to thrive and develop. Accordingly, health screenings evaluate the child's overall health status and regular health checkups and good practices in oral health, hygiene, nutrition, personal care and safety are incorporated into the program." Head Start is the largest federal program with early childhood development and school readiness as its primary focus, and is the centerpiece of the federal government's efforts to prepare the nation's most disadvantaged children for school. ADHA strongly supports the Head Start program and applauds its recognition that good oral health is a fundamental part of the wellness essential to success in school.

BLOCK GRANTING HEAD START WOULD THREATEN THE ESSENTIAL HEALTH COMPONENT OF THE PROGRAM

ADHA is pleased that the Senate HELP Committee's reauthorization of Head Start is not expected to include President Bush's proposal for a pilot program to block grant Head Start in eight states. The block grant proposal threatens to dismantle the existing federal system which has effectively served at-risk children for nearly forty years. Changing Head Start to a block grant jeopardizes the health component of Head Start. This committee's effort to preserve Head Start as a federal program will ensure that poor children throughout the United States will have access to the medical care that is requisite to ensure that a child can learn. The

health component of Head Start is vital to ensure that Head Start children are prepared to succeed in school. Indeed, sound health is a foundation for advancement in learning and social development.

ENSURING ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE

An astounding number of children under the age of five suffer from dental disease. Dental caries (tooth decay) is the single largest health problem among children. Dental caries is five times more common than asthma. Although dental caries is both treatable and preventable, many children fail to receive the proper dental screening needed to ensure treatment or prevention of the disease.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has confirmed in two separate reports to Congress that "dental disease is a chronic problem among many low-income and vulnerable populations" and "poor children have five times more untreated dental caries (cavities) than children in higher-income families." The GAO further found that the major factor contributing to the low use of dental services among low-income persons who have coverage for dental services is "finding dentists to treat them." Increased utilization of dental hygiene services—appropriately linked to the services of dentists—is critical to addressing the nation's crisis in access to oral health care for vulnerable populations. Indeed, ADHA is committed to working with Congress to improve access to oral health care services, particularly for our nation's children.

Children coping with severe dental problems suffer acute tooth ache and pain, thus inhibiting them from concentrating on learning in the classroom. These children miss twelve times as many days for dental problems compared to those children with access to dental care. Failure to correct dental problems at an early age can lead to a young adult's decreased desire to thrive in school, lower self esteem, and speech impediments.

Head Start has been overwhelmingly successful with providing at-risk children with dental care when Medicaid and SCHIP have fallen short. Disadvantaged preschoolers enrolled in Head Start are three times more likely to receive a dental screening compared to other disadvantaged children in Medicaid. In 2001, 81% of children in Head Start received a dental screening. Thirty percent of those children screened needed dental care, and 77% of them received it. By contrast, the GAO estimates that only 21% of two to five year olds below the poverty line received dental screening. This concrete evidence demonstrates that Head Start plays a vital role in ensuring that poor children not only have health insurance coverage but that they actually receive dental care.

Establishing Head Start as a block grant to states lifts stringent federal regulations, such as delineating when a child should receive medical care, attached to Head Start funding. Currently, federal regulations require Head Start grantees to assist with establishing a dental home for children, to provide oral screenings by dental professionals, to help families schedule appointments and coordinate treatment with a local dentist, and to follow-up on documented dental problems. Given Medicaid's already poor dental coverage for disadvantage children, preschoolers could be left with very limited or no dental coverage with relaxed regulations.

STRENGTHENING HEAD START'S ORAL HEALTH COMPONENT

With the reauthorization of Head Start before the Senate HELP Committee, committee members have a momentous opportunity to improve and strengthen an invaluable federal program that provides America's poor children with wonderful educational and developmental experiences. In addition to rejecting the President's block grant proposal, we urge the committee to consider: supporting and expanding interagency activities between Head Start and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at the Health Resources and Services Administration; ensuring that any Medicaid reform effort does not alter currently required pediatric dental and health benefits in Medicaid's EPSDT program; and encouraging Early Head Start to update its performance recommendations that dental supervision begins by the age of one.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the American Dental Hygienists' Association appreciates this opportunity to provide written testimony on "Reauthorizing Head Start: Preparing Children to Succeed in School and in Life." ADHA understands the need to improve Head Start's results within math and literacy; however, we do not believe the solution lies in cutting the health component of the program. Indeed, the health aspect of Head Start has been remarkably successful with ensuring proper medical care for participants when other government programs have failed. The cornerstone to learning is sound health. ADHA is committed to working with lawmakers, educators, researchers, policymakers, the public and dental and non-dental groups to improve

the nation's oral health which, as Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General so rightly recognizes, is a vital part of overall health and well-being.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit the views of the American Dental Hygienists' Association. Please contact our Washington Counsel, Karen Sealander of McDermott, Will & Emery (202/756-8024), with questions or for further information.

Raising Preschool Teacher Qualifications

With a Case Study on How New Jersey's Early Childhood Teachers are Getting Four-Year Degrees *and* Certification Under a Four-Year Deadline

Julia Coffman and M. Elena Lopez[1]

July 2003[2]

I. INTRODUCTION: The Importance of Teacher Qualifications

High quality early care and education supports children's school readiness and continues to support their performance in school. Teacher professional preparation is a crucial component of high quality care. Well-educated teachers with specialized training in early childhood education possess the knowledge and skills to have a positive impact on child outcomes. Based on research linking teacher qualifications, program quality, and positive child outcomes, many research, professional and advocacy organizations and experts back raising the qualifications of teachers, with the minimum qualification for a preschool teacher being a four-year degree and specialized training in teaching young children.

Research on Teacher Qualifications and Quality

The multi-state Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes study concluded that teachers' educational level differentiates poor, mediocre and high quality child care centers.[a] High quality settings employ teachers with more years of formal education. Children in high-quality settings have better social and cognitive outcomes, and these outcomes continue through the early school years.[b]

A Florida study of 150 child care centers determined that classrooms with more educated and trained teachers scored better on quality indicators that examine child-teacher and children's social interactions, children's interactions with learning materials, and environmental features that support those interactions.[c]

A North Carolina study of 180 child care centers concluded that teacher education and professional experience were related to overall program quality in child care centers. One third of centers served children with disabilities.[d]

The National Survey of Adult Literacy reported that adults with an associate's degree are twice as likely as those with bachelor's degrees to have literacy skills below the "competent level."[e] Young children need well-educated teachers to develop strong vocabularies and reading skills.

A. Why are preschool teacher qualifications important?

Two decades of research confirms that teacher qualifications significantly affect the quality of care and education provided to young children,[3] and that higher qualifications contribute to more positive short- and long-term child outcomes.[4]

Better-educated teachers benefit children, parents, and society. Research supports policy efforts to raise the minimum qualifications for preschool teachers to a four-year degree. Teachers with at least a four-year college degree consistently provide the high quality teaching and learning experiences that are crucial for young children's school success. Such teachers are more knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate teaching practices.[5] They display

characteristics conducive to young children's development, including warmth, enthusiasm for learning activities, clear communications, and encouragement of sharing and cooperation among children.[6]

Better-educated teachers are more skilled at helping children thrive. They are more sensitive and responsive to young children, and less harsh and restrictive compared to teachers with less training.[7] They provide richer language and cognitive experiences for children. The overall result is better child cognitive, linguistic, emotional and social development.[8]

Parents also benefit from better-educated teachers. The ability to work well with parents is integral to the repertoire of high-quality preschool teachers.[9] Education with field-based courses in family relationships help teachers communicate with parents, engage them in their children's learning, and link them to family support services.

Finally, society benefits when well-educated teachers work with young children. Young children develop social and emotional competence, and schools and communities avoid the high costs of remedial and special education services.[10]

B. Can policy influence higher teacher quality?

Despite the research linking teacher education and child outcomes, a substantial number of preschool teachers lack the qualifications needed to provide high quality learning experiences for young children. Only one-half of teachers of three and four-year-old children have a four-year degree.[11] By contrast, all public elementary school teachers must have a four-year college education. The most-educated preschool teachers work in the public schools, where 87 percent of teachers have at least a bachelor's degree.[12]

Policy support for strong teacher qualifications is inconsistent and highly variable. Of the 40 states that offer state-financed pre-K, just over half require teachers to have a bachelor's degree in early childhood or another subject.[13] Only 21 states require teachers in private early childhood programs to undergo any pre-service training.[14]

Existing early childhood teachers can meet four-year degree qualifications. While many early childhood teachers lack the four-year degrees that are recommended, teachers can make progress toward higher educational levels within a reasonable timeframe.

Many early childhood teachers in Head Start and other programs have course credits and two-year associate's degrees that can put them on a successful track toward a four-year degree. For example, in 1998 Congress mandated that 50 percent of Head Start teachers attain an associate's degree or higher, with a specialization in early childhood education or a related field, by September 2003. Between 1997 and 2001,the proportion of teachers meeting this standard grew from 34 percent to 45 percent.[15] The Head Start Bureau recently announced that the percentage of teachers meeting this standard in 2002 was 51 percent.[16] This demonstrates that a growing percentage of Head Start teachers have already made significant headway toward earning their four-year degrees.

Higher teacher qualification mandates cannot go unfunded. While teachers can achieve higher education credentials, they cannot do so without supports and an educational system that helps them succeed. Students need access to quality early childhood teacher education programs with adequate faculty to meet demand. Teachers need scholarships and other forms of financial and academic supports that enable them to meet the financial challenges associated with returning to school. And early childhood programs need to offer compensation packages that both attract and retain teachers in early childhood programs once they have obtained higher education credentials.

II. NEW JERSEY CASE STUDY: Requiring Four-Year Degrees and Early Childhood Certification within a Four-Year Timeline

The state of New Jersey offers a good case study on how to raise early childhood teacher qualifications and what it takes to make that policy successful. Five years ago, acting under the long-running *Abbott v. Burke* court case, the New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled on the qualifications teachers of three- and four-year-olds in the state's lowest-income school districts needed. As a result, the State required those teachers to have a bachelor's degree *plus* early childhood certification within a four-year timeline, and put together a set of financial and other supports to back the new mandate.

A. Why did New Jersey raise preschool teacher qualifications?

***Abbott v. Burke* is a New Jersey Supreme Court case about the funding and supplemental program needs of the state's thirty poorest school districts** (known as *Abbott* districts). This important case, and the Court's numerous rulings over the case's twenty-two year history, has focused on finding viable solutions for eliminating learning disadvantages and closing the achievement gap between students in the urban *Abbott* districts and their more affluent suburban peers.[17]

The *Abbott* case has resulted in significant benefits for low-income children in New Jersey. The Court's rulings have

Abbott v. Burke Timeline

- 1981 – *Abbott I* – Suit filed against the State of NJ on behalf of urban students in low-income school districts for equal educational opportunity and adequate programming.
- 1990 – *Abbott II* – Education found unconstitutional in the state's poorest districts. Parity required in educational spending and special programs in those districts. NJ legislature passed the Quality Education Act of 1990 (in response).
- 1994 – *Abbott III* – 1990 Act found unconstitutional in *Abbott* districts.
- 1996 – NJ legislature passed Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA), directing statewide standards-based reform.
- 1997 – *Abbott IV* – CEIFA found unconstitutional in *Abbott* districts because failed to provide sufficient funds. Funding parity ordered, and hearings on necessary supplemental programs.
- 1998 – *Abbott V* – Entitlements ordered for disadvantaged children - whole school reform, full-day kindergarten, high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, and facilities program.
- 2000 – *Abbott VI* – State failed to meet 1998 educational standards. Preschool quality standards clarified. *Abbott VII* – Implementation revisited tight timelines set for preschool plan submission, assessment, and approval.
- 2002 – *Abbott VIII* – Issues clarified around enrollment, educational standards and facilities, and redirected state implementation.

mandated unprecedented changes in the form of parity in education funding, and required specific supplemental programs in the *Abbott* districts "over and above regular education" to assist disadvantaged students. These supplemental programs include whole school reform, supportive health and social services, full-day kindergarten, and preschool for three- and four-year-olds.

***Abbott v. Burke* mandated high-quality and comprehensive preschool.** In 1998, under *Abbott V*, the Court ruled that *all* three- and four-year-olds in *Abbott* districts have access to a *high-quality* and *comprehensive* preschool education. The goal was to enable children in low-income school districts to enter kindergarten ready to learn, with the same skills and abilities as children in the state's wealthier districts. The Court based its judgment on a careful consideration of scientific research that shows high-quality preschool can greatly increase the school readiness of low-income children, and has long-term benefits in academic achievement and later adult life.

Components of *Abbott* Quality Preschool

Substantive Standards
Developmentally appropriate curriculum geared toward school readiness skill development.

Teacher Qualifications
A qualified and certified teacher and an assistant in every preschool classroom

Class Size
Maximum class size of fifteen students

Facilities
Adequate space, facilities, supplies

Supplemental Services
Transportation, dental, health, and other social services; services for children with disabilities and limited English proficiency

The Court, in *Abbott VI,* went a step beyond establishing a mandate for preschool in *Abbott* districts; it defined the standards for high quality programs. The Court's definition of high quality preschool focused on five areas – substantive standards, teacher qualifications, class size, facilities, and supplemental services for children. The State, with the Department of Education acting as lead agency, was charged with making available the resources to meet quality preschool standards.

Teacher qualifications were one component of high-quality preschool. The Supreme Court ruled that well-educated and certified teachers were a critical component of high-quality preschool. The Court asserted that without such teachers, the achievement gap between urban and suburban peers could not sufficiently be closed.

***Abbott* preschools include district-run programs, community-based child care, and Head Start.** The Court's ruling charged the thirty *Abbott* school districts with primary responsibility and authority for preschool programs. Districts were to contract with state-licensed community-based child care centers where possible to accelerate implementation and avoid duplication of services. Community-based child care centers were to be held to the same quality standards as district-run classrooms in terms of substantive standards, teacher qualifications, class size, facilities, and supplemental services.

Districts were also to include Head Start in their efforts when possible. Head Start programs were required to work systematically to achieve the same quality standards as other *Abbott* classrooms, with funding from the State to support those efforts.

B. What does New Jersey require of *Abbott* preschool teachers?

After the 1998 *Abbott* ruling, the State had to develop an appropriate definition of a "qualified and certified teacher" for the *Abbott* district preschools. In 2000 the Department of Education issued the formal definitions that are currently in effect.

***Abbott* preschool teachers need a bachelor's degree.** Teachers in community-based *Abbott* programs hired before September 2000, and who lacked the necessary academic credentials, were required to make annual progress toward a bachelor's degree and to obtain that degree within *four years*, by September 2004. Effective September 2001, *new* hires in all *Abbott* programs were required to have a bachelor's degree.

This qualification was not an issue for district-run preschool teachers because they already had bachelor's degrees. It was, however, an issue for teachers in community-based programs that contracted with the school districts (including Head Start programs). Those programs had lower minimum education requirements prior to the State's mandate. Therefore, while many child care and Head Start teachers had extensive experience working with young children, they had a mix of educational backgrounds, and 65% had less than a four-year degree.

***Abbott* Preschool Teacher Requirements**
(implemented in 2000)

Bachelor's Degree
+
P-3 Certificate

Deadlines
For new hires: *by September 2001*
For existing teachers: *by September 2004* (4 years)

Exemptions:
- Licensed elementary teachers w/ 2 years experience
- Teachers w/ nursery school certificates

***Abbott* teachers need Preschool to Grade Three (P-3) certification.** Existing teachers in community-based *Abbott* programs were required to obtain P-3 certification by September 2004. Effective September 2001, *new* teachers in all *Abbott* programs were required to have P-3 certification.

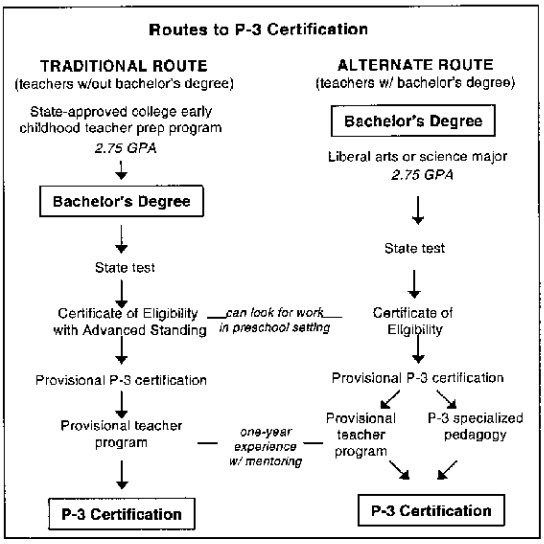
The P-3 certification ensures that above and beyond a four-year degree, teachers have the early care and education theory and supervised practical training that will make them effective teachers. Two categories of teachers were exempted from the P-3 certification requirement: teachers who already held the previously existing New Jersey Teacher of Nursery School Certificate (N-K), and teachers holding the standard Elementary School Teacher certificate (N-8) with two years documented experience working in an early childhood setting.

The certification requirement presented a significant challenge in that New Jersey did not offer early childhood certification when the Court made its ruling. After the mandate was issued, New Jersey colleges and universities quickly had to develop the certificate and associated curriculum (P-3 pedagogy), and identify the different "routes" that teachers could take to earn it.

The "traditional route" was created for individuals without a bachelor's degree. It requires the individual to complete a state-approved early childhood education teacher preparation program at a regionally accredited college or university with the P-3 pedagogy built in (5 courses)[18] and requires field-based clinical and practical experiences. Students completing the degree at or above a grade point average

threshold (2.75 on a 4.0 scale)[19], and passing a state test, become eligible for a Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing (CEAS). The CEAS allows teachers to look for work in preschool programs. Once an offer for employment is obtained, individuals can apply for a provisional P-3 certificate and enter the State's provisional teacher program, which requires mentorship in the preschool setting. The provisional teacher program offers thirty weeks of full-time, on-the-job support, with supervision and evaluations (three) provided by school-based professionals. After that year, and upon recommendation from the mentor and positive evaluations from a certified school administrator, the teacher receives P-3 certification.

The "alternate route" was developed for existing teachers in *Abbott* community-based programs who already had a four-year degree in a liberal arts or science major, but lacked training in the P-3 curriculum. Teachers with that degree who meet the specified GPA requirement and pass a state test, are issued a Certificate of Eligibility (CE). They can then take classes in the P-3 pedagogy and enter the provisional teacher program. Under the alternate route, the program provides 34 weeks of support, supervision, and evaluation. First year novice teachers receive 20 intensive consecutive days of mentoring before taking full responsibility for the class. Upon completion and positive recommendations and evaluations, P-3 certification is obtained.[20]



Existing teachers had four years to meet the new qualifications. The Court noted that reasonable, but limited, timeframes for achieving teacher qualifications would be necessary to meet the goal of providing qualified teachers as soon as possible. On the one hand, teachers in community-run preschools needed enough time to obtain their educational degrees without losing their jobs or creating a substantial shortage of qualified teachers. On the other, the timeframe had to be short enough to eliminate as quickly as possible any disparities between district-run and community-based programs (creating a two-tiered system). In addition it was important that more generations of children in the *Abbott* districts would not lose the opportunity that high quality preschool promised.

C. What did it take to support the new mandate?

It was not enough for the State to set out the requirements for teachers in *Abbott* classrooms. A series of supports were required to help teachers in community-based programs contracting with *Abbott* districts successfully meet the four-year deadline. Those supports required a commitment from the State to support teachers (with policies, information, and funding) in their education efforts, cooperation from colleges and universities to quickly meet the demand the new mandate created, a willingness from teachers to return to school, and the assistance of *Abbott* community-run preschools to accommodate teachers in their education efforts.

The table below outlines the core needs faced by the state's colleges and universities training *Abbott* teachers and the teachers themselves who had to go back to school. Needs are presented alongside solutions developed to try to meet those needs. These solutions were *essential* to meeting the new teacher qualification mandates.

New Jersey Needs and Solutions to Meet Teacher Qualification Requirements

	Core Need		Solution
Colleges/ Universities	Early childhood certification	→	P-3 Certification Routes to obtaining Certification
	Training system capacity and infrastructure	→	State and foundation grants
	Seamless system of transfer	→	Articulation agreements
	Outreach, support, and academic counseling services	→	Counseling for students
Teachers and Programs	Financial support for college	→	State-funded scholarship program for community-based *Abbott* teachers
	Supports to meet demands of work, family, and school	→	Release time from work Substitute pools
	Comparable compensation	→	State-supported parity between district- and community-run programs

The P-3 certificate was created. At the time of the Court's 1998 ruling, only one New Jersey college offered an early childhood degree. In fact, in 1988, and in large part because the public schools did not offer preschool at that time, the State Board of Education eliminated the state's existing nursery school certificate. Without the early childhood credential, colleges were not motivated to offer early childhood courses.

After the *Abbott* ruling, the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education brought together colleges and universities to develop the P-3 certificate. This included identifying appropriate pedagogy, courses, and credits. The timeframe was short; colleges had less than six months to put new programs in place. Initially, six colleges responded to the challenge. Now eleven New Jersey colleges offer the P-3 certificate.[21]

Colleges built capacity and infrastructure with necessary financial support. Because many of the state's colleges and universities did not offer early care and education courses, there was an overall shortage of faculty qualified to instruct in the P-3 pedagogy. Many early childhood faculty had either left the state for other positions, left the field altogether, or retired.

Despite this faculty shortage, many colleges built new early childhood programs focused on the P-3 certification. The State, through the Commission on Higher Education, and private foundations offered grants to support colleges in their efforts to increase capacity to support teacher preparation, which included the hiring of new faculty. Grants have been used in creative ways overall, including the building of an urban teaching academy at one university that supports transfer students for P-3 certification, provides enhanced academic support for P-3 certification students, and collaborates with urban teachers on curriculum, teaching, and mentoring.

Two- and four-year colleges created a more seamless system of transfer. Another challenge came from the lack of articulation agreements between two- and four-year colleges. Many community colleges offered terminal degrees (AAS) instead of a transferable degree (AA), and teachers with the terminal AAS degree lacked coursework that could easily transfer to a four-year institution. Eventually after negotiation, two- and four-year colleges in some New Jersey regions worked out articulation agreements for transferring course credits. And the public and privately funded New Jersey Professional Development Center for Early Care and Education provided leadership and coordinated collaboration in the development of articulation policies and agreements.

Building an effective statewide system of transfer remains, however, a challenge. Efforts are being made to improve communication between colleges and non-traditional students, and to create a more uniform system of transfer across the state's colleges.

Colleges offered outreach, special support, and academic counseling services. Many of the *Abbott* teachers returning to college faced significant challenges in adapting their lives to the demands of college. Others faced literacy and English-language challenges. Still others had been out of the academic environment for a substantial period of time and lacked basic study and time management skills. As a result, colleges created positions for academic advisors that could work closely with students on helping them succeed in the classroom.

Colleges also sought creative outreach solutions for students trying to earn P-3 certification. Special funding provided for on-site advisement in *Abbott* preschools. On-site courses were offered. For students without easy access to one of the colleges offering the P-3 pedagogy, some colleges began offering courses through more geographically convenient two-year colleges, at night and on the weekends, online, or using distance learning mechanisms. Dual registrations were offered in community colleges and receiving four-year institutions. Other colleges catered materials and courses to students with limited English proficiency.

A number of New Jersey community colleges with *Abbott* districts in their counties also stepped up to the effort to prepare community-based *Abbott* teachers to meet the new certification requirements. Representatives did outreach in communities to help teachers without degrees get started in transferable community college programs, and made special efforts to provide flexible scheduling and support services.

Teachers received State-funded scholarships to attend school. The lack of funding to return to college was a major barrier for many *Abbott* teachers. The State responded with a scholarship program. Using child care dollars from the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, the Department of Human Services provided scholarship funding for teachers employed in community-based *Abbott* programs. Scholarships paid for tuition and fees related to obtaining an early childhood education associate's or bachelor's degree and the P-3 certificate, including stipends to assist with books and other non-tuition expenses.

Policies and supports helped teachers manage work, school, and family. Many teachers who went back to school were parents who faced the additional challenge of working full time and attending school. While initially under the Court's ruling, *Abbott* districts were required to provide only half-day preschool and that gave teachers some flexibility to attend school, by the 2001-2002 school year they were required to implement full-day, full-year programs.

Preschool programs had to handle the problem of being able to provide quality programs under limited budgets while allowing teachers release time to attend school. State funds for a substitute teacher pool helped programs offer teachers time outside of the classroom, although finding enough teachers to fill the pool was challenging.

Teachers received parity in compensation. One of the biggest concerns in New Jersey was that even if teachers could meet the mandate in time, many would probably leave the *Abbott* community-based classrooms upon doing so because there was a lack of salary parity between teachers in district- and community-run *Abbott* classrooms.

Teachers working in district-run classrooms were paid substantially higher salaries than teachers in community-based programs, contributing to the notion of a two-tiered system. In large part this was because teachers in district-run classrooms had higher credentials than many in community-based settings. Once New Jersey made qualifications for all *Abbott* preschool teachers equivalent, compensation had to be equalized in order to reduce the risk that once preschool teachers attained their bachelor degrees they would leave the community-based early childhood setting for jobs in school districts or for other jobs with better compensation packages.

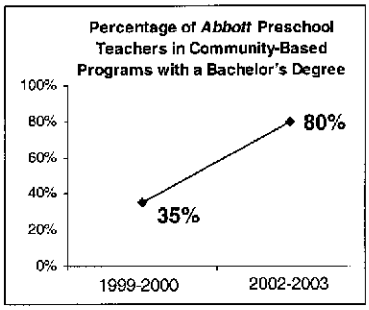
In its 2002 *Abbott VIII* ruling, the Supreme Court addressed the topic of salary parity between district-run and community-run *Abbott* preschool programs. The Court noted that ensuring qualified and certified teachers are available for all *Abbott* programs is an essential component of adequate state funding. Districts were required to address salary parity between district-run and community-based programs, and if community providers, including Head Start, demonstrated an inability to retain qualified staff due to salary parity problems, the Department of Education had to consider additional funding for teacher salaries.

While the State addressed some parity issues with salary adjustments to teachers at the end of the school year, more efforts are being waged to eliminate the two-tiered system, especially in the area of teacher benefits. While teacher salaries must be *equal*, benefits must be at a *comparable cost*. Because school districts can "buy" better benefits than community providers, teachers are still finding public schools a more attractive option.

D. Is New Jersey meeting its *Abbott* teacher qualifications mandate?

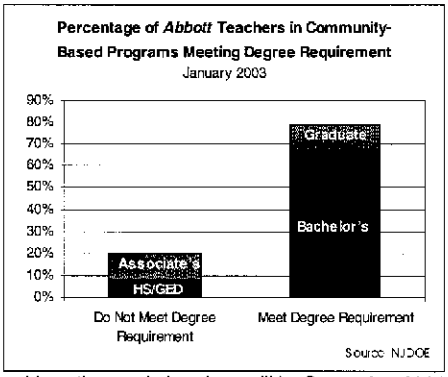
Abbott preschool teachers in community-based programs still have over one year to meet the bachelor's degree requirement and obtain P-3 certification. Data collected by the State Department of Education reveal that after almost three years, and in large part due to the supports discussed above, notable progress has been made.

A high percentage of *Abbott* preschool teachers now have a bachelor's degree. When the mandate began, only 35% of preschool teachers in community-based *Abbott* programs had their bachelor's degree.[22] A clear majority of teachers had to return to school.



According to the NJ Department of Education, 80% of *Abbott* preschool teachers *in community-based programs* now have a bachelor's degree or higher, more than twice the percentage only three years ago. Of the small percentage of teachers who do not yet have their four-year degree (20%), but still have more than a year to obtain it, most have at least a two-year associate's degree.

No official data exist on what has happened to all of the teachers who were working in *Abbott* preschools when the mandate began in 2000. The 80% figure represents the percentage of *Abbott* teachers that currently have their four-year degree. They are not necessarily the same individuals that were teaching when the mandate began.



Clearly, some *Abbott* teachers returned to school and earned their degree. Others chose not to return, left their positions as lead teachers in *Abbott* programs, and moved onto other non-*Abbott* early childhood settings, or took positions as classroom aides. Only a very small percentage of teachers currently in the *Abbott* classrooms without their bachelor's degree have chosen not to work toward that goal. With the supports discussed above, most teachers with the desire to get their degree have been able to achieve that goal already or will by September 2004. Advocacy efforts are underway to extend the deadline for those who are making satisfactory progress, but may not meet the four-year deadline.

P-3 certification results are promising. Data collected in January 2003 by the Department of Education suggest that of those with at least a bachelor's degree and not exempted from the P-3 certification, more than 35 percent have obtained the certification, and more than 55 percent have obtained a Certificate of Eligibility or Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing on their way to earning certification.

E. Has New Jersey seen any unexpected effects?

The preliminary results on teacher qualification requirements in New Jersey's *Abbott* districts are promising. They also warrant a discussion of unexpected effects as a result of the new mandate. Those involved in fulfilling the mandate – the State, colleges and universities, preschool programs, and the teachers or students themselves – acknowledge that this is a work in progress and much more needs to be done to improve the system in order to prepare future quality teachers both in and outside the *Abbott* districts.

Student demand is not waning. Initially colleges and universities that developed P-3 certification programs were concerned that student demand for these programs would decrease or plateau after an initial sharp increase. They feared the consequences of being able to sustain capacity under those circumstances. To date, demand for the P-3 certification has not dropped off, and colleges are working hard to attract new teachers.

Students see benefits of better educational preparation. In general, college administrators and faculty report that students who return to school find value in it. While there is some natural resistance to new ideas and techniques, particularly for teachers with many years of experience, overall there has not been a negative backlash among teachers who return to college.

The value of better educational preparation becomes most salient, of course, when it results in a substantial difference in compensation. For some teachers salaries have doubled, making a substantial impact on their own lives as well as the lives of their families.

Some teachers opted out. While many students have found value in returning to school, others chose not pursue further education. No official statistics were collected, but anecdotal data reveal that some sites experienced substantial turnover as a result of the new mandate. This resulted in an initial shortage of qualified teachers to fill those positions. The State attempted to counter that trend with outreach and incentives for teachers to take positions in the *Abbott* districts. For example, the Department of Education sponsored an initiative that offered cash incentives and laptop computers to attract *Abbott* teachers.

A relevant question is what happened to the teachers who opted out and left their positions in *Abbott* programs. Again based on anecdotal data, a number of scenarios played out. In some cases teachers were switched into different classrooms, so that teachers without the degree taught younger children or children in non-*Abbott* classrooms. Thus while quality increased in *Abbott* classrooms, it may have decreased in the classrooms of younger children or children in non-*Abbott* settings. Another scenario saw some assistant teachers interested in getting the degree switched into the lead teacher role, while the lead teacher not interested in going back to school switched into the assistant role. This role reversal caused some relational problems in classrooms.

Non-*Abbott* programs have seen some fallout. While the issue of compensation parity is being addressed within *Abbott* districts, this has had effects for early childhood programs outside of those districts, and within centers providing both *Abbott* and non-

Abbott classrooms. It has created a two-tiered system for *Abbott* and non-*Abbott* programs. For example, Head Start teachers earn $38,000 for a full year. *Abbott* teachers with the same qualifications in public schools earn $40,000 for ten months. As a result, Head Start has had to offer health and pension benefits in order to be competitive. For these same reasons, some programs in non-*Abbott* districts have had problems hiring teachers with higher credentials because teachers want to be employed by *Abbott* districts where compensation packages are better.

The final results are still out. Finally, the September 2004 deadline has not yet arrived, and therefore the final results are not in. While early results are promising, results on P-3 certifications have yet to play out completely. Teachers are in various stages of obtaining their certifications, but as of January 2003, a little under half of all teachers had not yet achieved necessary certification, and almost 15 percent of those teachers had not yet received their bachelor's degree.

Results also are not yet known on whether the increases in *Abbott* teacher credentials have shown the expected positive differences in classroom quality, and as a result, positive changes in child outcomes.

II. SUMMARY: Success Factors for Meeting Higher Preschool Teacher Qualifications

As the New Jersey experience demonstrates, preparing competent and qualified early childhood teachers requires multiple strategies implemented by numerous partners. Both research and the New Jersey experience suggest at least five key "success factors" for the successful implementation of policies that raise teacher qualifications.

Success Factors in Raising Teacher Qualifications

New Jersey's experience reveals that to successfully meet a mandate that preschool teachers have a bachelor's degree, that mandate needs to be supported with policies and sufficient funding for:

- Realistic but Ambitious Timelines
- Quality Teacher Education
- Strengthened Teacher Education Infrastructure
- Teacher Scholarships
- Adequate Teacher Compensation and Parity

Realistic but Ambitious Timelines
Early childhood teachers come to the field with varying educational levels. In raising the standard of teacher qualifications, realistic, but ambitious, timeframes should be set in ways that balance the needs of children as well as those of existing teachers and new entrants to the field.

▶ New Jersey was ambitious in its four-year timeline for *Abbott* teachers to earn their degree and certification, but results so far show that many teachers are well on their way to meeting it.

Quality Teacher Education
Early childhood teacher preparation programs need to be based on sound instructional practices and a quality curriculum. A major shortcoming of teacher preparation programs lies in their overemphasis on child development and learning that is separate from gaining the skills to plan curriculum, particularly when colleges employ primarily part-time faculty without time to provide needed mentoring.[23] Thus, in addition to

coursework, teachers should have field-based experiences with competent and well-qualified mentors who can model best practices and provide supervision.

> ▶ New Jersey made sure *Abbott* teachers had supervised field-based experiences through teacher preparation programs at state colleges and universities, and the provisional teacher program required for P-3 certification.

Early childhood teachers need to be prepared to teach children with diverse cognitive, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A large majority of teachers perceive that they are not well prepared to teach diverse types of children.[24] The quality of educational experiences needs to be raised to improving the course content, pedagogy, and field-based experiences in these areas among existing and new teacher cohorts.

> ▶ New Jersey's Department of Education specified areas of study required for the P-3 certificate. The P-3 specialized pedagogy includes study in child development and learning; understanding the family and community; and curriculum and assessment.

Strengthened Teacher Education Infrastructure

There are an estimated 1200 early childhood teacher preparation programs in the United States.[25] Most offer an associate's degree or less, and less than half offer a bachelor's degree.[26] Furthermore, these programs tend to have a small number of faculty (many part-time) serving large numbers of students, with little capability for providing students with out-of-classroom mentoring and career guidance. [27]

Policies that support the recommended four-year level for quality early childhood teachers require associated funding to address much needed increases in the infrastructure of teacher preparation programs. This includes addressing faculty shortages in the short-term, and developing recruitment systems that enable early childhood educators to obtain advanced degrees and become faculty members.[28] In particular, attention must be paid to recruiting ethnically and culturally diverse faculty to reflect the changing demographics of children in this country. Faculty also need ongoing professional development, especially in the areas of diversity, inclusive approaches, and accommodating individualized learners.[29]

> ▶ New Jersey State funds and state-based foundations supported colleges and universities with funding to build new early childhood teacher preparation programs and strengthen others.

Articulation issues must be addressed comprehensively so that students can earn and transfer credits from two-year colleges to four-year colleges. This involves appropriate resources (e.g. information, technical assistance) that facilitate institutional agreements. Two-year colleges need to clearly inform students about the difference between an associate's degree and a terminal certificate, the differences in course requirements for the two, and which classes may be transferred with full or partial credit to nearby four-year institutions. [30]

> ▶ In New Jersey, individual two- and four-year colleges negotiated articulation agreements and policies on credits transfer. Outreach materials and counseling were offered through multiple channels to inform students about transfer options.

Teacher Scholarships
To build a well-qualified teacher workforce, grant, loan and loan-forgiveness programs must be expanded. At the same time, new financial aid programs for early childhood teachers are necessary for those who have dedicated their lives to the care of young children but do not have high levels of formal education.[31] The early childhood education workforce consists of many low-income individuals who are unlikely to have earned a bachelor's degree or borrow large sums of money to pay for college. Federal research shows that low-income students are less likely to drop out of college if they receive grant aid rather than loans.[32] Whether teachers receive financial aid through loans or grants or through Head Start or the Higher Education Act, service requirements can be attached to aid to ensure that such individuals continue to teach in those programs (with appropriate compensation for higher credentials earned). [33]

> ▶ New Jersey's Department of Human Services provided scholarships for teachers in community-based programs who needed to return to school. These scholarships were essential; without them most would not have been able to afford additional education opportunities.

Academic and nonacademic support services add value to a scholarship program. The average age of teachers of 3-and 4-year old children is 39 years.[34] Being out of an academic setting for a long period of time requires adjustments to the demands of coursework. Teachers can be motivated to pursue and complete their degrees when adequate advising and remedial help are available.

> ▶ New Jersey colleges and universities offering the P-3 certificate provided special supports and counseling services to help students deal with issues of literacy, English proficiency, and study and time management skills.

Adequate Teacher Compensation and Parity
It is not enough to raise the standards of teacher qualifications to assure high quality care for America's young children. Preschool teachers are poorly paid. The median salary in 2002 was $21,332, less than what a janitor or cook typically earns.[35] By comparison, the median kindergarten teacher's salary was $43,152, double the median preschool teacher's salary.[36]

Preschool teacher compensation is associated with program quality.[37] Poor pay and poor benefits make for high teacher turnover that, in turn, weakens the social and emotional relationships between children and teachers. Learning is a social activity and does not occur divorced of its context. Less than optimal results can be expected when social relationships lack the trust and nurturance that stability brings.

Compensation issues must be addressed in order to recruit and retain good teachers in early education programs. Poor working conditions and wages are one of the key challenges in attracting and retaining students to in the early childhood profession.[38] Without parity in compensation for early childhood teachers who earn four-year degrees, teachers will seek higher paying jobs in kindergarten or elementary classrooms.

> ▶ New Jersey provided State funding to address compensation parity between teachers in public schools and community-based programs.

ENDNOTES

[1] Authors are consultants to the Harvard Family Research Project. Correspondence may be directed to Julia Coffman at Julia_Coffman@msn.com and M. Elena Lopez at elena_lopez@post.harvard.edu.

[2] This brief is based on research conducted in June 2003. Two methods were used to gather data for the brief: 1) literature and document review, and 2) key informant interviews with individuals representing the perspectives of researchers, New Jersey colleges and universities, New Jersey's Department of Education, early childhood teachers, and funders.

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[18] P-3 pedagogy includes study in three areas: child development and learning, understanding family and community, curriculum/assessment.

[19] Responding to concerns about the impact of this GPA threshold on hiring otherwise qualified staff, the State Board of Education issued a two-year moratorium on the 2.75 requirement, and lowered the GPA level to 2.50 until September 2004.
[20] Note that some colleges also offer a master's program leading to P-3 certification.
[21] Bloomfield College, Caldwell College, College of Saint Elizabeth, Kean University, Monmouth University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, Rowan University, Seton Hall University, The College of New Jersey, William Paterson University.
[22] Barnett, W.S., Tarr, J., Lamy, C., & Frede, E. (2001). *Fragile lives, shattered dreams: A report on implementation of preschool education in New Jersey's Abbott districts.* New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Early Education Research.
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[26] Early & Winton (2001). Ibid.
[27] Early & Winton (2001). Ibid.
[28] Early & Winton (2001). Ibid
[29] Isenberg (2002). Ibid.
[30] Personal communication with Trust for Early Education, June 23, 2003.
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[32] U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. (1994). *Occupational projections and training data.* Washington, D.C.: Author.
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STATEMENT OF MANDA LOPEZ

Thank you Chairman Gregg, Ranking Member Kennedy and honorable members of the Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for this opportunity to submit testimony. It is critical that an open discussion take place regarding the changes that are being proposed for the 2003 Head Start Reauthorization and that particular attention be paid to some of our nation's most vulnerable children.

I submit this testimony on behalf of the 28 Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs that are members of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association and the parents and children they serve.

Our message to you regarding reauthorization of Head Start is twofold. First, we urge you to consider the unique nature of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs as you craft the reauthorization legislation and we support maintaining the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs Branch as a critical step in that direction. Secondly, we urge you to ensure that this legislation devotes additional resources to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start in order to address the documented funding shortfall that prevents more than 80% of the eligible children from receiving services through our programs.

BACKGROUND ON MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

As you know, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs were launched as a response to the needs of migrant farmworker families and our programs are designed to address the specific needs and challenges faced by these families.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers work in various sectors of our nation's agriculture industry—from harvesting to sorting to processing and everything in between. While it is hard work and requires special skills, most farmworker families earn less than $10,000/year and have no health benefits according to a study submitted to Congress in 2000 by the United States Department of Labor.

Due to the nature of farm labor, children need full day services—often from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and often 6 days a week. In many states, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs operate from May to October, rather than the typical school year schedule, and of course, many of the families and children are on the move for much of the year and need services at different times, in different states and locations.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs serve nearly 32,000 migrant children and nearly 2,500 seasonal farmworker children annually, operating in 38 states in every region of the country. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs were the first Head Start programs to serve infants and toddlers and today more than two-thirds of the children in the program are infants and toddlers.

For migrant and seasonal farmworker families having 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 with their families either to contribute to the family income or because no child care was available. It can easily be argued that a lack of services in this situation contributes to child labor in this country. Children in the field are at risk of injuries from farm equipment, over exposure to the elements, pesticide poisoning, and of course the long term health risks associated with exposure to chemicals. In many cases, if a slot is not available in a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program or no Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program exists in the area there is no alternative but to take a child to the field or perhaps leave them unattended in the labor camp.

ENSURE THAT THE UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START ARE ADDRESSED

We recommend that the following issues be addressed in the reauthorization legislation to ensure that the unique elements of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start are maintained and that the particular barriers that face our programs are taken into consideration.

Federal Programs Branch or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

We feel strongly that the Federal Programs Branch for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start be maintained. Over the past year we have voiced concern with how Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs would be treated if states were granted some or all authority to administer Head Start program funds and we have consistently urged both the Administration as well as members of Congress to consider the unique elements of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program when exploring the state option proposal.

There are several reasons for maintaining the federal branch for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. First, the vast majority of children in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start are migrants and often reside in more than one state through the course of the year. It is unrealistic to expect that states would or could provide services to temporary residents. Secondly, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs are unique in that they provide full day services and are targeted to harvesting seasons which vary from state to state. And lastly, the majority of children served in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start are infants and toddlers, who with their parents are learning a second language. Loss of this specialized early involvement would be a huge step backward when considering the brain development research regarding emergent literacy.

Training and Technical Assistance

Due to the unique needs of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs, training and technical assistance is critical to the programs. While changes are currently being made by the Head Start Bureau to streamline training, it is the hope of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs that the training model will take into consideration the approaches to training and technical assistance that have been historically successful for our programs.

The mobility of our families and the specific linguistic and culturally relevant needs are among the factors that should be considered when designing a training model in addition to the fact that we have programs operating in 38 states and as families cross state lines for work our programs are working to see that they continue to have access to services.

Therefore it is far more efficient to maintain the federal nature of the TA for the same reasons that the program funds have been maintained. For instance the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs come together for an annual training conference funded by Training and Technical Assistance funds which ensures that our professional staff are receiving program specific training. Issues such as transitioning children and their records from state to state and how to better coordinate the transition of records so that children's health records follow them and as a result children are not receiving multiple immunizations. For children with special needs their records and IEP's (Individualized Education Program) or ISFP's (Individualized Family Service Plans) follow them as well so that programs can continue therapy without a delay in services.

If all technical assistance funds are directed to specific activities such as assisting local Head Start Agencies or programs to meet performance standards, we urge you to include specific language setting aside funds to support the training and technical assistance needs of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs. Unless specifically named in the statute we fear that the training and technical assistance needs of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs will be overlooked.

Quality Standards

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs and the children and families they serve have unique needs that must be accommodated in the development and enforcement of quality standards and we would like to see language included in the Senate bill to ensure that the rural and short-term nature of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs are taken into account when developing standards.

Staff Qualifications and Development

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs face unique challenges in hiring and retaining staff. In contrast to the Early Head Start year with 260 days, and the Regional Head Start typical year with 160 days, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs operate anywhere from 20 days (four weeks) to 189 days (nine months). Because these programs operate in some of the most rural areas in the nation, it is difficult to find staff that meet minimum qualifications, especially for the short-term programs. Programs spend considerable funds training staff and once staff meet the qualifications, they often leave for longer term, more stable employment. This results in staff retention issues and a low percentage of staff who meet current minimum qualifications.

Rural programs are forced to recruit from a limited pool of applicants including program parents especially where programs require bilingual staff. In addition, many staff and parents are monolingual Spanish speaking and must therefore learn English prior to being eligible to participate in local associate degree programs.

It is critical that Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs have adequate access to technical assistance and training funds to support their ongoing teacher training and support needs. We have advocated that in allocating technical assistance and training resources some priority consideration be given to areas where there is a shortage of qualified personnel. Such a priority would be of great help to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs as well as other rural or short term programs facing similar challenges in securing and maintaining training staff.

ENSURE ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START PROGRAMS

Ensuring that a federal branch for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start is maintained is critical but without additional funds directed to our programs we still face the realty that only 19% of the children eligible for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start are being served.

The last Head Start reauthorization bill, the Coats Human Services Amendments of 1998 (P.L. 105-285), established eligibility for children of seasonal farmworkers and instructed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to study the

need and demand for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. The HHS study, The Descriptive Study of Seasonal Farmworker Families, was released in September 2001, and documents that only 31,400 out of 161,400 (19%) of eligible migrant and seasonal children are served through existing Migrant and regional Head Start Programs. By comparison, Regional Head Start programs serve approximately 60% of their eligible population.

We urge you to build on the progress made in the last reauthorization bill by making sure that more eligible children have access to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. We can now point to an HHS study that documents the unmet need and we ask that the statute direct additional funds to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs to address the documented need.

Over the last eight years, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs have consistently received less than 4% of the Head Start annual appropriation.

The Migrant and Seasonal Programs are funded, along with Indian Head Start, children with disabilities, technical assistance, program review, research and demonstrations, out of a 13% statutory set aside from the annual Head Start appropriation.

Based on current program funding it would cost an additional $750,000,000 to achieve parity between the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and the Regional Head Start. Such an increase would bring current funding from $250,000,000 to over $1,000,000,000 and enable Migrant and Seasonal Head Start to serve 60% of the eligible population.

While completely closing this funding gap between Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Regional Head Start may be unrealistic in the near future, we urge you to consider making the following statutory changes designed to increase funding for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs and move them towards parity with regional Head Start programs.

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

First, we recommend that language be included in the statute to ensure that Migrant and Seasonal Head Start receive at least 5% of the appropriated funds. The funding of our programs is currently at the discretion of HHS and programs have never received more that 4% of the funds appropriated annually.

Secondly, we recommend that language be included in the statute to ensure that Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs can access Early Head Start funding: While Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs serve both infants and toddlers the programs do not have access to the Early Head Start Funds that are available to Regional Head Start Programs. Early Head Start Funds are only available to full year program and leaves Migrant and Seasonal Programs to provide full day services to both infants and toddlers without the benefit of these extra program funds or technical assistance funds.

I appreciate this opportunity to share the concerns of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association and I would be happy to answer any questions that you or your staff might have related to our programs or our policy recommendations. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE NAVAJO NATION

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the Head Start program is of critical importance to the health and welfare of Navajo children. Head Start enables the Navajo Nation to invest in its most valuable resource, the children of the Navajo Nation. On behalf of the Navajo people, I thank you for this opportunity to present our concerns and recommendations regarding proposals before Congress to change the Head Start program.

BACKGROUND

The Navajo Reservation is geographically as large as Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maryland combined. The unemployment rate on the Navajo Nation currently ranges from 36% to 50%. Our per capita income is $6,123 which is less than one third of its state neighbors, Arizona and New Mexico. The Navajo Nation Department of Head Start (NNDOHS) serves nearly 6,500 children who otherwise would not receive comprehensive services. Navajo children alone represent one third of all Native American children who receive Head Start services throughout the United States.

The Navajo Nation Department of Head Start (NNDOHS) is one of the largest Head Start organizations operating in the United States today. In fact, they are one

of only ten super grantees recognized by the Department of Health and Human Services. The 5 Head Start Agency offices of the Navajo Nation must serve a growing population whose birth rate is 21.7 per 1,000 compared to the U.S. at 14.8 per 1,000.

Since its inception in 1965, NNDOHS has taken on new initiatives to provide comprehensive health, educational, nutritional, socialization and related cultural services to promote school readiness. NNDOHS provides medical, dental screenings and nutritional meals to students. Parenting classes and counseling services are also offered to Head Start families on the Navajo Nation with a special component for career development to help Navajo parents provide better lives for their children.

NNDOHS is nationally distinguished as the only Head Start that offers programs to preserve culture and language. Navajo Nation believes that Navajo Language and culture are an integral part of the whole child. Language and culture is a way of life that defines one's self-identity and self-esteem. It is the hope of the NNDOHS to aid in the preservation of the Navajo language and culture.

ISSUE

The Navajo Nation has two primary concerns related to changes reflecting President Bush's proposal to Head Start programs. The first is moving existing Head Start programs from the Department of Health and Human Service to the Department of Education. The second point of contention regards the delegation of Navajo Head Start authority to States under the proposed demonstration project. The following is a brief outline of these concerns:

1. The Navajo Nation believes transferring responsibility and by extension, services, from HHS to the Department of Education would alter how services are currently provided to Navajo children. Due to the remoteness and unmet transportation needs of several communities, many children are unable to reach hospitals for regular check ups and other child health care needs. In turn, Navajo head start centers become providers of this service. Considering the high unemployment and poverty rates of the Navajo Nation, it is safe to say that without Head Start many children would go to school hungry. In some instances, the meals children receive through the head start program are the only reliable means of getting a good breakfast and lunch. The transfer does not guarantee that these essential program components such as comprehensive services, career development of community residents, and extended day services meeting the needs of working parents will be sustained.

2. The Navajo Nation believes the proposed state demonstration project would create uncertainty and chaos for communities like the Navajo Nation that reside in more than one state. The Navajo Nation is located within Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. If any of these states were to become a demonstration site, the Navajo Nation would be thrust into a gulf of uncertainty as to how to reconcile state and federal Head Start regimes.

Furthermore, such a state demonstration project would undermine the government to government relationship between tribes and the United States government, forcing the Navajo Nation to seek Head Start funding from a state that may very well view tribal interests as threatening there own. Our experience has been that when federal dollars that are intended for tribes are passed through states the money often does not make it to the reservation. Federal transit funding is a case in point. States are supposed to pass through a proportionate amount of their federal transit funds to tribes located within a state. However, states typically do not permit this pass through.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure that Head Start remains within the Department of Health and Human Services and not be moved to the Department of Education to ensure that children continue to receive comprehensive services with strong parental involvement.

Exempt the American Indian Alaskan Native Program Branch from State demonstration projects to protect the government-to-government relationship as well as the delivery of federal funding to tribal communities.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the Navajo people, I urge this Committee to consider how changing the Head Start program will effect your most vulnerable and neglected constituents-the Native American people.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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