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EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE: WHAT IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE?

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

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

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING THE FEDERAL ROLE TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND COORDINATION OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THE HEAD START PROGRAM, THE CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF), AND INCREASING FOOD SECURITY AND REDUCING HUNGER

APRIL 20, 2005

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EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE: WHAT IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE?

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2005

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lamar Alexander, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Enzi, Dodd, and Kennedy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Good morning. The Education and Early Childhood Development Subcommittee will come to order. We welcome our witnesses for what ought to be a very interesting discussion.

I want to welcome Senator Kennedy, who is the ranking member of the full committee. Senator Dodd, the ranking member of the subcommittee, will be here after he makes an opening statement at another committee. Between the two of them, they have about 16 more years of experience than I do, or something like that. It is a pleasure to work with them both.

This is a subject in which we are all very interested, and let me see if I can frame it a little bit and then I will ask Senator Kennedy if he would like to make some opening remarks and Senator Dodd when he comes.

The purpose of the hearing is to learn more about the effectiveness of the 69 Federal programs that help parents help their young children with child care and early education. By the end of the hearing, we hope to get an assessment from the witnesses from three major Federal departments about how these programs are working.

I hope that this hearing is the beginning of a year-long look at Federal programs for early childhood education and care. I have talked with other members of the committee about this topic. We welcome our chairman of the full committee, Senator Enzi of Wyoming. It is a top priority with him, with Senator Kennedy, and with Senator Dodd. I have talked with Secretary Spellings and Leavitt and Johanns about it and they have talked with each other. We see this as an unusual opportunity for us to take stock of what we have without necessarily knowing before we start what our con-

clusion will be, to see where we should go from here, and then maybe we can find a consensus about any changes that we might need to make.

We each have our personal perspectives on early childhood education. Let me tell you mine. I grew up in the mountains of East Tennessee and attended my mother's nursery school and kindergarten program, which was in a converted garage in the backyard of our house. It was the only preschool education program in our county. She had 25 3- and 4-year-olds in the morning and 25 5-year-olds in the afternoon.

And even then, more than a half-century ago, she was able to identify in those young children gifts that they had, problems that they had, diseases that they had that their parents didn't know about. She was convinced of the importance of early childhood education. She noticed that when people moved into Maryville, our little town, that the first thing they did was try to enroll their children in what I would call Mrs. Alexander's Institution of Lower Learning

[Laughter.]

Then they would go look for a house, because even then, parents knew the importance of early childhood education.

Now, let us jump ahead a half-century and think how much more we have learned about that since then. Specifically, about how a child's brain doubles between birth and the age of 3. This has been reflected by the interests of governments. Forty years ago, the Head Start program began as a pioneering program, but today, it is only $6 or $7 billion of $18 to $21 billion that the Federal Government spends through those 69 programs for children under 6, and that doesn't even count Medicaid and other programs. So the Federal Government has noticed the importance of early childhood for those families especially who can't afford to provide it for their own children.

And then States have recognized it. Forty States, I believe, have some form of preschool education program, and many of our Head Start centers are now affiliated with school districts. So we have a lot going on in this area. We can be almost certain that it is not being as well and effectively spent as it might be if we would take a look at it, just because of the way the world changes.

So we are really free to look at all of these programs, the Federal ones, and then as we get on into other roundtables and hearings, we will look at the State programs and the local programs and determine, maybe there are some programs that are unneeded. Maybe there is some money that is being spent one way that can be spent another way. Maybe we need to spend additional funds in a different way. Maybe we can learn something from different programs.

For example, we might learn from the Department of Agriculture something about Food Stamp money, because Food Stamp money goes to parents. Parents then have a variety of choices about where they can spend that Food Stamp money, at different kinds of institutions. We also do that in our higher education model. We don't do it very much in elementary and secondary education.

Title I dollars, which are spent for elementary and secondary education, might be better spent sometimes in preschool programs.

They may be spent that way, and maybe we could encourage that. I was just at a meeting of chief State school officers and the suggestion was made to me that perhaps we could try to implement the President's suggestion that we get the States more involved with Head Start without damaging one of the great strengths of Head Start, which is the autonomy and independence. We might give training grants to State Departments of Education who are working with early childhood programs, including Head Start, and for the next 3 or 4 years, let us see what we can learn from States creating model programs and model training programs as they seek to train preschool teachers and teachers in the elementary grades.

So I guess it is fair to say everything is on the table. Everybody is interested. We have got an administration with three Secretaries that are talking to each other about it. We have got a committee with people on both sides of the aisle who put a high priority on it. We have a GAO report from the year 2000 that took a look at these programs. Senator Voinovich did a lot of work on that study. We have asked for an updating of that report. We will see what we can learn from the Federal witnesses at this hearing and then we will develop an agenda after talking with the other Senators about how to go from here. Hopefully, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, by the end of the year, or shortly thereafter, we will come back with some suggestions about how we can do the best possible job of spending Federal dollars to help parents who have very young children who need preschool education and who need child care.

Senator Kennedy?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much. I want to thank Chairman Alexander, for holding these hearings and for his strong commitment in this area. I see Chairman Enzi, as well, the chairman of the full committee. This bodes well for this whole endeavor that we are involved in and I thank him and welcome all of our witnesses that are here, some individuals who are good enough to help us on a variety of different public policy issues involving children and education. We are very fortunate to hear from them.

Early childhood education deserves the same high priority we now give to elementary, secondary education, and college education. It is essential to children's later success in school and in life. It is indispensible in minimizing learning disabilities and emotional disorders and it is effective in reducing crime and keeping our communities safe. A number of Federal programs already support children in their early years and encourage their social, emotional, and intellectual development, but too often, they fail to do the job.

What we do in children's earliest years profoundly affects the rest of their lives. Extensive scientific research makes this point clear, from the landmark Neurons to Neighborhood report, to the decades-old Perry Preschool study. If we fail to meet children's developmental needs starting at birth, we shortchange our children and our society as well. All of this is an area that we haven't given focus and attention to and offers enormous possibilities.

If you look through the results of the Perry Preschool program, the Adledarian program, and the Child-Parent Centers program in Chicago, all of these indicate the benefits of early intervention and the impact it has had on children and children's development. It has really been enormously important.

So the research confirms what we have known all along, that every child is born ready to learn. The question is, what opportunities will children have to reach their full potential?

Head Start gives low-income children immunizations, develops their vocabulary and reading skills, and provides early knowledge of numbers. Title I preschool programs give children the building blocks they need to do well in their kindergarten classes and elementary school years. The school breakfast and lunch programs make it possible for nearly 30 million low-income children to receive nutritious meals every day at school. Each of these programs has a distinct goal and provides a distinct service. Each is a lifeline of support for children from low-income families.

Two overall factors, quality and access, are critical to achieving our goals. The quality of children's experience determines whether they develop well and have the skills to enter school ready to learn, and the successful early development depends heavily on the relationships they can build with those around them, regardless of the setting of the program that they are in. That is why it is critical for us to focus on improving the quality of all of our early childhood education programs, and we owe it to all the children to be sure that their basic development needs are met, no matter where they can get the care.

Our efforts in Congress will also depend on guaranteeing access to these essential services. Budget cuts that compromise these goals are unacceptable. Head Start, the Nation's hallmark commitment to children, serves fewer than six out of ten children who are eligible. Early Head Start, for the youngest children, serves only 3 percent of the children that are eligible.

Better interagency cooperation and coordination are obviously important here, and we are going to hear more about that this morning. They must include State and local efforts. But coordination efforts that expand services for some should not come at the expense of curtailing them for others.

We are very fortunate to have witnesses here this morning that can really help our committee and all of us understand this issue better. I commend the chairman and look forward to the testimony.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Chairman Enzi?

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ENZI

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate you holding these hearings. I would ask that my full statement be in the record. I am glad that you are holding these hearings. I had no idea that we had as many programs until I got this chairmanship, and now I am very interested in what each program does, how effectively they do what they say they will do, what kinds of duplication we have so that we can best allocate resources to the most effective programs and make the ones that aren't as effective more effective.

I think there is a lot of good that can come out of both the hearings and the work that we do, so I thank you for taking the initiative on this and getting it done. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your statement will be included.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Enzi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL B. ENZI

I want to thank Senator Alexander for calling this subcommittee hearing to address the role of the Federal Government in our early childhood education programs. I also appreciate our witnesses taking the time out of their very busy schedules to be with us.

Today's hearing will give us a chance to focus on early education programs with two questions in mind. First of all, are early education programs effective and do they play an important role in our goal of providing all our citizens with access to a lifetime of learning? Secondly, if these programs are effective, how can we best use our resources to make them available to more of our children, especially in rural areas where the delivery of these services has been hampered by problems with geography, personnel and resources.

Earlier this week a report was released that cited a study that started 40 years ago. It took a close look at the economic impact of good preschooling on children determined to be at risk. Although limited in scope, the study found that the group that received a quality education was more likely to complete school, they had better jobs, they were making higher incomes, they were more likely to own their own homes, and they were less likely to be on welfare or to have turned to crime.

Those are the kind of statistics that get our attention—especially the estimate that every dollar invested in early education programs saved taxpayers as much as $13 later on in public education, criminal justice and welfare costs.

We shouldn't be surprised. There's an old saying, it's not where you start, it's where you finish. In today's world, with today's educational opportunities, we are finding the opposite is true. More often than not where you start determines where you finish and those who get off to a good start have dramatically better finishes than those who do not get that same break at the beginning.

Fortunately, the importance of a good education is a lesson that was learned a long time ago and the Federal Government has been doing its best over the past years to increase access to these vital programs. From a handful of programs that were begun during the War on Poverty in the 1960's that commitment has grown to more than 60 such programs around the country. Many of these programs serve similar populations of young children. Programs like Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, and many others authorized through No Child Left Behind, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and numerous others, are providing Federal support for States or local communities to provide services for children.

Congress has an interest in ensuring that these programs are working together, so that our children will receive the services they need and are eligible to receive. We should also be looking at ways we can improve the collaboration between Federal, State, and local

programs, so more children can begin the learning process early, and enter school ready and fully prepared to learn.

Many of these programs appear to overlap, and many States and local communities are struggling with running similar programs with different requirements. Several of these programs are operated by different Federal Departments and the funds are delivered to different State agencies. In some cases, Federal funds are provided directly to local grantees without any State involvement.

This inconsistent approach to early childhood education has created a number of challenges that may be preventing States and local agencies from helping students more effectively. The Federal Government is asking different entities receiving Federal funds to operate each of these programs slightly differently, frequently without any form of collaborative arrangement.

It is my hope that today's hearing will help provide a foundation for stronger collaboration between these programs, so our children can get the best start possible and Federal dollars can be used most effectively. I look forward to today's testimony and the discussion that will follow.

Senator ALEXANDER. I would like to introduce all three witnesses and then invite each of you to take what you need to summarize your statements. Maybe you could take 6 to 8 minutes to summarize your statements, or less if you wanted, and then that would give us more of a chance to have a conversation with you, but take the time you need.

I will give brief introductions. Kate Coler is Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. She was appointed that at the end of 2003. She works to make the Nation's agricultural abundance to end hunger and improve health in the United States. She represents the United States Department of Agriculture, where she first worked as Deputy Administrator of the Food Stamp Program.

Ray Simon is Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. He used to be the superintendent in Arkansas and he was a school superintendent himself. He was called in in the middle of the implementation of No Child Left Behind and given various missionary assignments out across the country and has done a remarkably good job, according to the State school officers with whom I meet. We appreciate his service and we welcome him here.

Dr. Wade Horn is almost a member of this committee, he is here so often. We are delighted to have him again. He is Assistant Secretary for Children and Families in the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He was President of the National Fatherhood Initiative and has had a distinguished career.

We welcome all three of you, and I would like to say again, although I am sure you will say it, that in each case, I have talked with the Secretary of your Department and each has told me of how interested they are and what a priority they put on this initiative. So we are here, as they say in Washington, to help, to learn what we need to know and find out what changes we need to make and see if any of it requires legislation.

Dr. Horn, I would like to start with you, and then go to Mr. Simon, and then Ms. Coler.

STATEMENTS OF WADE F. HORN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; RAYMOND SIMON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; AND KATE COLER, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. HORN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the programs in the Administration for Children and Families that focus on early childhood education, particularly the Head Start program and our child care programs.

The administration is committed to helping to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and looks forward to working with the Congress and particularly with this committee to improve the effectiveness and coordination of all programs that support the healthy development and school readiness of our Nation's children.

With an appropriation of nearly $7 billion, Head Start's mission is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children. This year, the program will serve nearly 910,000 children in nearly 50,000 classrooms located across the country.

Additionally, through the Child Care and Development Fund, we provide $4.8 billion to States, territories, and tribes to subsidize child care for low-income working parents and to improve the quality of care for all families that use child care. When TANF funds are considered as well as other State and Federal funding sources, over $11 billion currently is available for child care and related services for children. This funding will provide child care assistance to an estimated 2.2 million children this year.

Combined, Head Start services and child care assistance provided through the Child Care Development Fund offer an enormous opportunity to influence the healthy development and school readiness of low-income children, and success in school is a strong predictor of success in life, as reflected in lower delinquency rates, less teen pregnancy, higher incomes, fewer health issues, less suicide, and so forth.

To help States make informed early care and education policy decisions, we are equipping them with relevant research findings about effective practices. Research into child development, with its recent focus on how children develop early literacy skills, gives us an increasingly clearer picture of what knowledge and skills children need to attain in the preschool years in order to be successful in school and in life.

Many of our research and evaluation efforts are coordinated with others in HHS and also with the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture. For example, the Interagency School Readiness Consortium, a multimillion-dollar collaborative program between HHS and the Department of Education, supports research on the effectiveness of early childhood curricula, programs, and

interventions in promoting the range of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills necessary for a child's success when turning to school.

I believe that we all agree that Head Start makes positive contributions to the lives of tens of thousands of children and families. But if the program is to achieve its full potential, we must better integrate new research findings about early childhood learning into the program.

The same holds true for child care services. Key to the administration's efforts to focus on an integrated and coordinated approach to early childhood learning is the President's Good Start, Grow Smart early childhood initiative first announced in 2002. The initiative contains three key elements related to partnering with States to improve early learning.

First, research-based early learning guidelines in each State that describe what it means to be kindergarten-ready, no matter what care setting a child is coming from.

Second, Statewide professional development plans linked to the early learning guidelines for educating and training child care and preschool teachers and administrators.

And third, coordination across major early childhood programs and funding streams.

To promote Good Start, Grow Smart goals, we have created strategic partnerships with States to improve early childhood programs through a significant infusion of guidance, training, and technical assistance. Within the Head Start program, we implemented an intensive national teacher training program in early literacy. Within the child care program, States have been encouraged to include Good Start, Grow Smart objectives in their Child Care Development Fund State plans, and we have provided technical assistance and training for States, tribes, and territories to assist in this effort. States have embraced the Good Start, Grow Smart goals and have made tremendous progress.

Further, an interagency Good Start, Grow Smart work group representing early childhood programs at HHS and the Department of Education coordinates Good Start, Grow Smart activities across the two Departments and works together to achieve school readiness goals for young children. This work group is focused on creating and maintaining a shared vision for early childhood education at the Federal level and with State and local constituents.

In addition, since 2002, a series of regionally-based meetings have been conducted with State stakeholders from child care, Head Start, and education to develop a strategic plan for implementing Good Start, Grow Smart in their States. ACF's child care and Head Start staff have partnered with the Department of Education to provide national training for States, territories, and tribes, including a forum on child care and early literacy and two State roundtables on early learning guidelines and professional development.

We will continue our efforts to forge significant partnerships on behalf of children and families to maximize the number of children served and the positive impacts provided by Head Start and Child Care Development Fund funded child care. To help us accomplish

greater coordination among all early childhood players, we look forward to working with the Congress on several fronts.

First, we are asking Congress to include in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act a provision that will allow interested States to include Head Start in their preschool plans. Under the proposal, States are offered the opportunity to coordinate preschool programs with Head Start programs in their States in exchange for meeting certain accountability requirements.

Moreover, to improve coordination, the President's welfare reform reauthorization plan proposes allowing States to integrate funding and program rules across a broad range of State welfare and workforce programs, including CCDF and other early childhood programs. States can request under this waiver authority the authority to better integrated Federal programs, including program eligibility and reporting requirements. The goal of each of these two legislative initiatives is to provide maximum flexibility to States in order to allow better coordination across program lines.

I appreciate your strong interest and ongoing commitment to strengthening coordination across early childhood programs and to improve the quality, effectiveness, and coordination of services, and in turn the care and education of the Nation's low-income preschool children. Working together, I am sure that we can make this vision a reality. Thank you very much.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Dr. Horn.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WADE F. HORN, PH.D.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss programs in the Administration for Children and Families that primarily focus on early childhood education and care of children under 6—the Head Start and child care programs. The administration is committed to helping to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and looks forward to working with the Congress to improve the effectiveness and coordination of all programs that support the healthy development and school readiness of our Nation's young children.

With an appropriation of nearly $7 billion, Head Start's mission is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children. Some 1,600 Head Start grantees throughout the country strive to fulfill this mission through the provision of comprehensive education, child development, health, and social services to enrolled children and their families. This year the program will serve nearly 910,000 children in nearly 50,000 classrooms located across the country.

In addition to the Head Start program, the Administration for Children and Families administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Through CCDF, we provide $4.8 billion in funds to States, Territories and Tribes to subsidize child care for low-income working parents and improve the quality of care for all families that use child care. In addition, States have the flexibility to use TANF funds for child care both by transferring up to 30 percent of TANF funds to CCDF, and by spending additional TANF money directly for child care. When TANF funds are considered, as well as other State and Federal funding sources, over $11 billion currently is available for child care and related services for children. This funding will provide child care assistance to an estimated 2.2 million children this year. While available for children under age 13, most child care funds are used for preschoolers, infants and toddlers.

Combined, the Head Start program and child care assistance provided through the CCDF offer an enormous opportunity to influence the healthy development and school readiness of low-income children. I would like to share with you the steps we have taken to improve the quality and effectiveness of these programs, including our efforts to integrate and coordinate our efforts within HHS and with other agencies with related goals. I would like to begin by discussing the research that is guiding our efforts.

Research on Early Childhood Programs

The bottom line for the President in early childhood learning is school readiness—improving the learning experiences and strengthening the focus on accountability for outcomes from those experiences. Research tells us a great deal about the skills and knowledge children need to be successful in school. And success in school is a strong predicator of success in life, as reflected in lower delinquency rates, less teen pregnancy, higher incomes, fewer health issues, less suicide, and so forth.

To help States make informed early care and education policy decisions, we are equipping them with relevant research findings about effective practices. Research into child development, with a recent focus on early literacy skills, gives us a progressively clearer picture of what knowledge and skills children need in the preschool years and predict later school success. For instance, we know that children need exposure to language and a variety of vocabulary words, mainly through meaningful conversations and reading with adults. We also know that children need exposure to the sounds and letters that are the basic building blocks of language. Equally important, they need well-developed social and emotional skills that allow them to participate in group activities and have positive interactions with adults and peers. We also know that the knowledge and skills that help children prepare for kindergarten can be nurtured in a variety of settings, including Head Start programs, preschools, and home-based child care providers.

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is at the center of our research on the quality and effects of Head Start. FACES, an ongoing longitudinal study of Head Start programs, drawing on a nationally stratified random sample of between 2,400 and 3,200 children, provides in-depth information on such areas as child outcomes, family involvement, and key aspects of program quality and teaching practices.

FACES data have been collected for children entering Head Start in 1997, 2000, and 2003. These data show that children enter Head Start with levels of academic skills and knowledge far below national norms. Although children demonstrate progress in early literacy and social skills, their overall performance levels when they leave Head Start still remain below national norms of school readiness.

Research on Early Head Start programs demonstrated that children in Early Head Start functioned significantly better than a randomly assigned control group in cognitive and language development and their parents report they were more likely to read to them regularly. However, like older children in Head Start, children in Early Head Start leave the program still lagging behind their more advantaged peers in some areas of development.

Another important element of our research agenda is the Head Start Impact Study, now underway. It is the first large-scale, nationally representative study of Head Start using a randomized control group research design. This study will compare outcomes for Head Start children with what they would have been in the absence of the program, and will show how impacts differ among children, families, and programs with different characteristics. We hope to publish the first findings from this study shortly.

In addition, we are funding several projects that are testing the effectiveness of innovations and improvements in Head Start, Early Head Start and related services for young children. Through partnerships among local Head Start programs and universities and other research organizations, we are sponsoring the development and testing of cutting-edge approaches to literacy, children's approaches to learning, measurement of children's development, and the use of assessment to enhance teaching.

We also have implemented a National Reporting System (NRS) to collect child outcome data from every local Head Start program. This reporting system was launched in the fall of 2003 when approximately 436,000 4- and 5-year-old children received a common standardized assessment of a limited set of key school readiness indicators. The participation rate was greater than 99 percent of all Head Start programs and families in this largest-ever assessment of young children. Each local Head Start program that participated received a report on the average levels of performance of both English and Spanish-speaking children on each of the four sections of the assessment: language comprehension, vocabulary, letters of the alphabet and early mathematics skills. The reports allowed programs to compare their results to national averages and to results for agencies with similar characteristics. Programs will use the data from the NRS to improve the delivery of services in those areas in which the NRS suggests improvement is needed. We will assist them in this effort.

With respect to child care, we also are funding a comprehensive research and evaluation agenda that focuses on: the effectiveness of strategies to improve children's early learning; the impact of professional development efforts in changing

caregiver skills and practice (including coordination of training efforts across early care and education systems); and the impact of partnerships and collaborations among Head Start, child care, and pre-kindergarten in promoting child, provider, and family outcomes. We launched a 4-year, multi-site study of alternative approaches that show promise for improving the knowledge, skills, and performance of child care providers across the range of care settings. This research will help States make informed decisions about how to use their CCDF quality improvement dollars to support children's early learning.

Many of our research and evaluation efforts are coordinated with others in HHS and the Department of Education. For example, we are supporting an enhanced analysis of early learning indicators in the National Household Education Survey. Further, to ensure that policymakers and administrators have easy access to key research findings, a Child Care and Early Education Research Connections archive was launched a year ago. Research Connections is an online, interactive database of research, information, and data sets on topics related to early care and education.

In addition, the Interagency School Readiness Consortium, a multi-million dollar collaborative program between HHS and the Department of Education, supports research on the effectiveness of early childhood curricula, programs, and interventions in promoting the range of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills necessary for the child's successful entry into school. Eight research teams are rigorously evaluating cutting edge early childhood intervention implementation in public settings—including Head Start, child care, State pre-kindergarten and blended programs.

Further, in partnership with the National Institute of Health (NIH) National Institute for Child Health and Development (NICHD), we are creating additional measures that may be used to replace or to extend the current measures with the National Reporting System. With its investment of $3 million annually in Head Start Research, Development and Evaluation funds during fiscal year 2005 through fiscal year 2009, the work governed by the ACF and NICHD partnership will support the administration's commitment to our Nation's most vulnerable children who remain at risk for not achieving success in school.

Efforts to Improve Head Start and Child Care

I believe that we all would agree that Head Start makes positive contributions to the lives of thousands of children and families. But if the program is to achieve its full potential, we must integrate new research findings about early childhood learning into the program. The same holds true for child care services.

Key to the administration's efforts to focus on an integrated and coordinated approach to early childhood learning, is the President's Good Start, Grow Smart Early Childhood Initiative announced in 2002. The President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative provides a clear charge not only to Head Start but to the entire early childhood education field, including child care programs. The initiative contains three key elements related to partnering with States to improve early learning: research-based early learning guidelines in each State that describe what it means to be kindergarten ready, no matter what care setting a child is coming from; statewide professional development plans, linked to the early learning guidelines, for educating and training child care and preschool teachers and administrators; and coordination across major early childhood programs and funding streams.

Good Start, Grow Smart encourages program coordination across early learning efforts, particularly among four key programs—CCDF, Head Start, public pre-kindergarten programs, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Through joint planning and information sharing, we are working together to ensure that State Good Start, Grow Smart partnership efforts are coordinated with other related State initiatives, such as the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grants funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, our sister agency at HHS. These grants are helping States work across programs to develop and implement collaborations that support families and communities to raise children that are healthy and ready to learn.

Further, an Interagency Good Start, Grow Smart workgroup representing early childhood programs at HHS and the Department of Education coordinates Good Start, Grow Smart activities and works together to achieve school readiness goals for young children. This workgroup is focused on creating and maintaining a shared vision for early childhood education at the Federal level and with State and local constituents.

We also are paying particular attention to the needs of children with disabilities. For example, this summer ACF's child care, Head Start and developmental disabilities staff along with staff from the Department of Education will be co-sponsoring the National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute to develop better collaborative rela-

tionships and cross-agency systems to support early childhood inclusion for children with special needs.

To promote Good Start, Grow Smart goals, we have created strategic partnerships with States to improve early childhood programs through a significant infusion of guidance, training and technical assistance. Within the Head Start program, we implemented an intensive national teacher training program in early literacy. Project STEP, Head Start's Summer Teacher Education Program, provided training to all of the nearly 50,000 Head Start teachers in early literacy teaching techniques. Project STEP has enhanced the effectiveness of Head Start teachers by providing intensive teacher training on strategies to foster children's progress in specific indicators of early language and pre-reading skills, including phonological awareness, vocabulary, print and book awareness, letter knowledge, and early writing.

Within the child care program, States have been encouraged to include Good Start, Grow Smart objectives in their CCDF State plan and we have provided technical assistance and training for States, Tribes, and Territories to assist in this effort.

States have embraced the Good Start, Grow Smart goals and made tremendous progress. Every State successfully submitted plans for Good Start, Grow Smart only 1 year after its launch. Many States are engaged in embedding the early learning guidelines in expanded professional development systems. All States have created partnerships with key early care and education programs in their States and are coordinating with these stakeholders in the establishment of their professional development systems.

Since 2002, a series of regionally-based meetings have been conducted with State stakeholders from child care, Head Start and education to develop a strategic plan for implementing Good Start, Grow Smart in their States. ACF's child care and Head Start staff have partnered with Department of Education to provide national training for States, Territories, and Tribes, including a Forum on Child Care and Early Literacy and two State Roundtables on early learning guidelines and professional development. We also have provided individualized technical assistance for many States, including onsite consultation.

States are taking the initiative to advance coordination efforts as well. For example, Ohio recently launched the Early Learning Initiative where programs in Ohio integrate Head Start, Child Care and public pre-kindergarten into a program with the same standards and requirements. ACF is providing funds to support Ohio's efforts to evaluate whether and how partnerships between programs improve the quality of education that children receive. This project will study observed quality and children's school readiness in child care-Head Start partnerships in randomly-selected child care center classrooms and family child care homes, and examine whether, and under what conditions, these partnerships are related to observed quality and the school readiness of children.

Next Steps

We will continue these efforts to forge significant partnerships on behalf of children and families to maximize the number of children served and the positive impacts provided by these programs. Coordination is essential at the Federal, State and local levels. Nobody benefits by a fragmented approach to meeting pre-school children's needs and, working together, we can be greater than the sum of our parts. Although many States have demonstrated significant interest in, and commitment to, building strong early childhood systems in recent years, no State has a comprehensive system of early care and education that makes high quality services available to all low-income families who want them for their children.

To help us accomplish greater coordination among all early childhood players, we look forwarding to working with the Congress on several fronts. First, to strengthen the Head Start program, improve services to low-income children, and promote the coordination and integration of comprehensive early care and education services, we are asking Congress to include in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act a provision that will allow interested States to include Head Start in their preschool plans. Under the proposal, States are offered the opportunity to coordinate preschool programs with Head Start programs in exchange for meeting certain accountability requirements.

Moreover, to improve coordination, the President's welfare reform reauthorization plan proposes allowing States to integrate funding and program rules across a broad range of State welfare and workforce programs, including CCDF and other early childhood programs. States can request demonstration authority to integrate aspects of Federal programs, including program eligibility and reporting requirements. The goal of each of these legislative initiatives is to provide maximum flexibility in order to allow coordination across program lines.

Conclusion

I appreciate your strong interest and ongoing commitment to strengthening coordination across early childhood programs to improve the quality, effectiveness and coordination of services and in turn, the care and education of the Nation's low-income preschool children. Working together we can make this vision a reality.

Senator ALEXANDER. We welcome Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut, who is the ranking member on this subcommittee, who has taken it upon himself in the last few years to try to personally populate the preschool education programs of the country with two young children.

[Laughter.]

Welcome, Senator Dodd. You are welcome to make opening statements now or at a later time.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Senator DODD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And if I doze off, I want you to know it has nothing to do with the quality of the testimony and your leadership on this committee. But when you are up at 3:00 and 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning, it——

Senator KENNEDY. That is your wife, Chris, not you.

[Laughter.]

Senator DODD. Jackie is not listening right now.

[Laughter.]

Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank you immensely for holding these hearings and for your interest in the subject matter as well as your interest on the issues before us. Just a few comments, if I could, and I thank our witnesses, as well, here for their testimony.

I certainly agree with the chairman and others who have spoken that there are numerous programs, obviously, that are geared toward children, from birth to age 5, that we should have a clear understanding of what these goals are so that we have as much cooperation as we possibly can have. I certainly believe that additional efforts to coordinate between Federal and State programs are worthwhile and we ought to examine how we can best promote coordination.

I don't want to overstate the issue, though, and that is my concern, that as important as coordination is, and we ought to examine it, but the underlying problem is that we are underserving populations in this country that really need additional attention. Only half of eligible children who could participate in Head Start are actually participating today. About three percent of eligible infants and toddlers participate in Early Head Start in our country. Only one out of every seven eligible children receives child care assistance.

Coordination could make a difference in these areas, but I don't want to overstate the case, and that would be my worry here, that we have things we need to do where coordination could play a role but coordination alone is not the answer. At some point, we need to talk about the investment as a nation that we are willing to make and whether we really want to make these kinds of commitments on behalf of the most vulnerable children in our country.

We know that quality child care, for instance, can make a difference, particularly in the outcomes of poor children, yet State

policies based on insufficient resources have led to subsidy rates far below the going rates for child care in many communities, reduced income eligibility for assistance, and increased parent co-pays. All of these policies have shut the door of quality child care to many, many low-income families across our country.

We could fully fund Head Start. We could make all Head Start programs full-day programs instead of mostly part-day programs. We could provide additional child care funds to Head Start centers to offer wrap-around care so that working parents can have their children participate in Head Start without worrying about who will watch their children before the program begins and after it ends.

CBO has estimated, of course, that this would cost an additional $500 million. It is not inexpensive to do this, although I would make a case that those moneys could be well spent in terms of seeing children get a proper beginning and a proper start.

So I think we all share the common goals. We all want our children to start school ready to learn and we want to offer preschool programs to all children, but particularly to poor kids who often start kindergarten way behind their wealthier counterparts, and there is no question about that whatsoever. So we want to make sure that all children have the building blocks in place that will make them successful in elementary school, and we have got a lot of work to do to make that happen.

Coordination is certainly an issue, and I support the chairman's examination of those issues. But I think we also need to understand the underlying concerns here that exist today with a lack of resources committed to some of these very well-tested, good programs that are underserving significant parts of our population that deserve more help.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much. I look forward to the witnesses.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

Mr. Simon?

Mr. SIMON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, look forward to continued dialogue on this very important issue.

President Bush has long recognized the importance of education during a child's earliest years. A signature program in that effort is Early Reading First, which draws on scientifically-based research to enhance pre-reading skills and improved skill readiness for children from low-income families.

Mr. Chairman, you may know that Tennessee has three Early Reading First projects, including one in Wayne County that has served as a part of our research to practice work. They have retooled some of the ways they do business to make the program more effective. We appreciate their work with us in giving us some early research.

More generally, the Department has subjected all of its programs to close scrutiny for evidence of effectiveness and duplication, and our early childhood programs are no exception. We take seriously the goal of streamlining and consolidating our programs wherever possible and we want to avoid the potential inefficiencies highlighted by the GAO in its April 2000 report on early childhood education and care.

As a result, if the GAO were to update its list today in education, early childhood programs, it would number 26, not 34, after the consolidation or elimination of eight programs on the earlier list. Our 2006 budget request would eliminate an additional seven programs on GAO's April 2000 list. President Bush also has emphasized the importance of coordinating the broad array of Federal early childhood programs, both to improve efficiency and to encourage parents, early childhood educators, and other caregivers to use research-based activities to help develop the early language and pre-reading skills of young children.

The goal is to use the findings of scientifically-based research, particularly in the area of reading, to strengthen the education component of Federal early childhood programs so that such programs effectively help prepare children for success in school.

The President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative created an interagency work group involving both the Education and Human Services. It has played a critical role, for example, in encouraging and helping States to identify voluntary high-quality early learning guidelines. Nearly all States have drafted these guidelines. That committee work group meets monthly.

Last fall, this work group sponsored the second State Early Learning Guidelines Roundtable, where 10 of the most progressive States shared their experiences implementing early guidelines and in collaborating across child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and early childhood education partners.

Good Start, Grow Smart also launched the interagency School Readiness Consortium, which is investing $40 million in research on the effectiveness of early childhood curriculum, programs, and interventions in improving readiness for school.

More recently, Secretary Spellings has stepped up interagency collaboration with Secretary Leavitt, with assistance from Dr. Reid Lyon, one of the Nation's foremost experts on early childhood development and education. Dr. Lyon will split his time between both agencies to help strengthen Federal early childhood programs.

I believe we have made considerable progress since the publication of the April 2000 GAO report, both at the Department of Education and in concert with our fellow agencies. We will continue to measure program effectiveness, streamline and consolidate programs, require the use of scientifically-based research to deliver effective services, and work with other agencies to coordinate separate programs serving the same population.

On a personal note, please know that when I was State chief in Arkansas, I worked very closely with our State Department of Human Services to coordinate preschool programs. It is a very important priority to me personally, and my first administrative job back in 1972 for 2 years was Director of School Food Services, so I have a little bit of a connection with the Department of Agriculture.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to be with you today.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Simon.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Simon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAYMOND SIMON

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to bring you up to date on the Department of Education's efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education. From the very beginning of his administration, President Bush—with help from First Lady Laura Bush—emphasized the importance of education during a child's earliest years, based on their understanding of new scientific research on brain development and early cognition that suggested a new paradigm, one focused on prevention of learning difficulties rather than remediation. Since then, we have worked hard to incorporate that paradigm into each of the early childhood education programs we administer at the Department of Education.

More recently, Secretary Spellings has stepped up interagency collaboration with Secretary Leavitt of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Importantly, this collaboration will include the insight and leadership of Dr. Reid Lyon, one of the Nation's foremost experts on early childhood development and education. As most of you know, while at the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Lyon played a key role in developing Early Reading First and Reading First, which I believe are the first Federal education programs to mandate the use of scientifically based research in reading instruction for low-income children, both in preschool and in the early elementary grades.

Five years ago, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a report on early education and care that highlighted the large number—69 in all—of Federal programs that provided or supported education and care for children under age 5. Because of the sheer number of these programs, as well as the fact that they were administered by no fewer than 9 separate agencies or departments, the GAO quite reasonably suggested that the Federal Government might not be supporting early childhood education and care in the most efficient and effective way possible. The GAO also suggested that performance and evaluation data then being collected under the Government Performance and Results Act should be used to guide policymakers in making the reforms needed to improve the delivery of effective early childhood education.

I believe we have made much progress since the publication of that GAO report, both at the Department of Education (ED) and in concert with our fellow agencies. Particularly with regard to our own programs, we have worked hard to measure program effectiveness, streamline and consolidate programs, require the use of scientifically based research to deliver effective services, and coordinate separate programs serving the same populations.

WHITE HOUSE SUMMIT

In July of 2001, First Lady Laura Bush hosted a White House Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development as part of her *Ready to Read, Ready to Learn* initiative. This initiative had two broad goals: to ensure that all young children are ready to read and learn when they enter kindergarten, and to ensure that every classroom has a well-trained teacher, particularly in high-poverty areas.

The Summit aimed at supporting these goals by publicizing the findings of scientific research into early cognitive development and encouraging parents, early childhood educators, and other caregivers to use research-based activities to help develop the early language and pre-reading skills of young children. This reflected the administration's belief that education was not a strong enough component of most early childhood programs: that there was little connection between preschool activities and what children are required to do once they enter school; that few early childhood programs were evaluated on the basis of how well they prepared children to succeed in school; and that parents, early childhood teachers, and other caregivers had little valid information on how to prepare children for success in school.

GOOD START, GROW SMART

To help address these problems, in early 2002 President Bush launched his *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative, which aims to strengthen the academic focus of Head Start programs, encourage States to develop quality criteria for early childhood programs that are aligned with their K–12 academic standards, and expand research into effective pre-reading and language curricula and teaching strategies in order to provide better information to parents, teachers, and caregivers.

A key achievement of *Good Start, Grow Smart* was the creation of an Interagency Workgroup that includes offices involved in early childhood education and care from both ED and HHS. ED participants include my own office, which administers the Early Reading First, Title I, Even Start, and the Early Childhood Educator Profes-

sional Development programs; the Office of Special Education Programs, which administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Preschool Grants and Grants for Infants, Toddlers, and Families programs; and the Institute for Education Sciences, which carries out research on early childhood education. The Workgroup meets monthly to coordinate Federal efforts to support the implementation of *Good Start, Grow Smart* in States and local communities.

As part of *Good Start*, *Grow Smart*, ED developed and published a guide for caregivers in early 2002 called *Teaching Our Youngest*. We also collaborated with HHS in hosting regional Early Childhood Educator Academies that were designed to assist States in developing voluntary high-quality early learning guidelines. Nearly all States have now drafted these guidelines. Last fall, the Interagency Workgroup sponsored the 2nd State Early Learning Guidelines Roundtable, where 10 of the most progressive States shared their experiences implementing early learning guidelines and collaborating across child care, Head Start, Pre-K, and other early childhood education partners.

Under the research component of *Good Start*, *Grow Smart*, ED's Institute for Education Sciences is investing significant resources in scientific research on early childhood education, including a systematic evaluation of preschool curricula based on randomized trials and an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study is tracking the experiences of children from birth through 5th grade. IES's National Center for Education Evaluation also is conducting large-scale randomized trials to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of reading instruction.

Good Start, *Grow Smart* also launched an interagency early childhood research initiative, known as the Interagency School Readiness Consortium, which includes ED and HHS and is led by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. This initiative is investing $39.5 million in research on the effectiveness of early childhood curricula, programs, and interventions in promoting the range of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills necessary for a child's successful entry into school. In 2003, the Consortium made 5-year grants to 8 institutions across the country to identify the types of early childhood programs and interventions that are most effective—when implemented in public settings, including State pre-kindergarten, Head Start, child care, and blended programs—in supporting early learning and school readiness, with an emphasis on literacy and social competence outcomes.

ED PROGRAMS: EMPHASIS ON EFFECTIVENESS AND CONSOLIDATION

Within the Department of Education, we have subjected all of our programs to close scrutiny for evidence of effectiveness and duplication, and our early childhood programs are no exception. We also have sought to employ the findings of scientific research in improving the effectiveness of our programs, particularly in the areas of cognitive and language development and early reading instruction, key priorities for effective early childhood education.

The GAO report that I mentioned earlier found that the Department administered 34 programs providing or supporting early childhood education and care. GAO distinguished between programs for which those activities are merely allowable and those for which they are a basic program purpose, and I believe this distinction is an important one. In the interest of expanding flexibility for States and communities, Congress has increased the range of allowable activities for many programs in recent years, especially for our large State formula grant programs. This new flexibility makes a lot of sense, both educationally and administratively, and I believe it is somewhat misleading to count such expanded authorities as though they were discrete programs. To cite just one example, prekindergarten programs are one of no fewer than 35 authorized activities under State Grants for Innovative Programs, a program specifically designed by Congress to provide maximum flexibility for States and school districts. To call such a program an early childhood program implies a level of duplication and overlap that does not really exist.

But as I said, we do take seriously the goal of streamlining and consolidating our programs wherever possible, and if the GAO were to update its list of ED early childhood programs today, it would number 26 and not 34, after the consolidation or elimination of 8 programs on the earlier list. And our 2006 budget request would eliminate an additional 7 programs on GAO's April 2000 list.

One key program that has been targeted for elimination is Even Start, a popular family literacy program with laudable goals, but one that national evaluations repeatedly have found to be ineffective. The key finding is a simple one: the literacy gains of children and adults participating in Even Start were no greater than those of non-participants. We think it makes more sense to direct our energy and resources to more promising approaches.

KEY ED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The Department's Reading First initiative provides the best evidence of the President's determination to inject rigor into Federal education programs by grounding them in scientifically based research. The Reading First State Grants program requires the use of curricula reflecting scientifically based reading research to help ensure that all students can read on grade level by the end of the third grade. Early Reading First is a complementary effort to jump-start this goal by infusing research-based pre-reading instruction into existing early education programs for disadvantaged children.

Early Reading First is designed to help provide preschool-aged children with cognitive learning opportunities in high-quality language and literacy-rich environments in order to enhance pre-reading skills and improve school readiness for children from low-income families. More specifically, projects provide ongoing professional development and materials, services, and activities aimed at fostering oral language development, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge. Funded at $104 million in fiscal year 2005, Early Reading First currently serves about 28,000 children in 92 projects nationwide. Initial performance reports for Early Reading First are promising, suggesting that a majority of participants are achieving age-appropriate benchmarks on measures of vocabulary and alphabet recognition.

Mr. Chairman, you may know that Tennessee has three Early Reading First projects, including one in Wayne County that took part in the Department's Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Study. In a true example of research-to-practice, Wayne County is now using the results of that study to better prepare teachers and staff to implement a new curriculum. In particular, the project is now providing extensive professional development to teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators, including the use of facilitators to provide coaching and mentoring to teachers and staff.

Another program that provides significant support for early childhood education—though an often-overlooked one—is Title I, which provides preschool services to about 2 percent of participants, or about 400,000 children, at an estimated annual cost of about $500 million. As research increasingly confirms the value of high-quality preschool education and its potential for improving later academic achievement, the Department is working to provide leadership and guidance in helping States and school districts create effective preschool programs that develop cognitive and early reading skills and contribute to school readiness. Key strategies in this effort are the promotion of the scientifically based methods of Early Reading First to strengthen Title I preschool programs, and encouraging States and school districts to use Title I funding to increase the education component of other existing preschool programs.

Other major ED early childhood programs are those authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These include Special Education Preschool Grants and Grants for Infants and Families. The $385 million Preschool Grants program supplements funds provided under the IDEA Grants to States program to help States and school districts serve about 700,000 children with disabilities ages 3 through 5, with the goal of ensuring that these children start school ready to succeed.

The Grants for Infants and Families program provides formula grants to assist States in implementing a coordinated statewide system of early intervention services for children with disabilities, from birth to age 2, and their families. This $441 million program will serve an estimated 286,000 children with disabilities in fiscal year 2005.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Department of Education continues to play a major role, in concert with other Federal agencies, in advancing the President's goal of improving the quality of early childhood education and care, especially for children most at risk of later failure in school. In particular, the Department has taken the lead in promoting the use of scientifically based research to improve interventions at all levels of education, including interventions that improve school readiness skills, such as oral language development, pre-reading skills, and social development. We also are committed to measuring results, and to using those results—as recommended by the GAO 5 years ago—to streamline and consolidate our programs in order to provide more efficient delivery of effective early childhood education services. I will be happy to take any questions you may have.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Coler?

Ms. COLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Kate Coler, Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I am pleased to be at today's hearing to discuss the Federal Government's role in providing education and care to children under 6 years old.

The Food and Nutrition Service is responsible for managing 15 domestic nutrition assistance programs. Its mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires the public's confidence.

The President's budget for fiscal year 2006 demonstrates the administration's unwavering commitment to this mission by requesting the record level of $59 billion in new budget authority to administer our nutrition assistance programs. These programs include the Food Stamp Program, which provides nutrition assistance to over 25 million low-income people. Over 50 percent of Food Stamp participants are children. The program enables low-income families and individuals to improve their diets by increasing food purchasing power using electronic benefits that are redeemed at retail grocery stores across the country.

Under the umbrella of the child nutrition programs, which includes the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program, we provide reimbursement to State and local governments for nutritious meals and snacks served to over 30 million children in schools, child care institutions, after school care programs, and adult day care centers.

Additionally, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, also known as WIC, addresses the special needs of at-risk low-income pregnant, breast-feeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to 5 years of age. WIC provides 8 million participants each month with supplemental food packages targeted to their dietary needs as well as nutrition education and referrals to a range of health and social services. These benefits promote a healthy pregnancy for mothers and a healthy start for their children.

Our major goals in administering these programs focus on three areas. First, promoting access to and awareness of the programs so that all eligible people can participate with dignity and respect. Second, building a healthier U.S. with nutrition education to support healthy weight and healthful behaviors. And third, enhancing the program integrity with which our programs are administered.

In short, Mr. Chairman, these food assistance programs are primarily nutrition programs that help participants obtain a better diet. They do not overlap with education programs or with child care programs. They have a clear purpose and a distinct function separate from, but complementary to, the goals of targeted education and child care services.

The Food and Nutrition Service is proud of our efforts to coordinate with other Federal agencies to ensure that Federal funds are used to maximize benefit delivery. We work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services and with the Department of Education to ensure that benefits provided under child nutrition

programs are fully integrated into the Head Start and Even Start programs. In fact, the Department of Health and Human Services encouraged Head Start centers to participate in meal services offered under the Child and Adult Care Food Program. By using these funds through CACFP to support their food service, Head Start funds that were available for nutrition services are then freed up for use for other important educational activities.

Program regulations ensure that children in Head Start and Even Start families are automatically eligible for free meals when they participate in child nutrition programs.

We have also worked closely with the Department of Education's 21st Century Schools to ensure that these programs are aware of snacks that are available through the National School Lunch Program.

All of our programs have a long history of working with our counterparts in other agencies to ensure that they complement early education efforts.

In summary, USDA's mission is to provide nutrition assistance in a variety of settings, but not to interfere with nor duplicate other efforts of Federal and State programs. On the contrary, the Food and Nutrition Service programs enable these other programs to operate better by making sure that young children have access to proper nutrition and are ready to learn. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Coler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATE COLER

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Kate Coler, Deputy Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

I am pleased to be at today's hearing to discuss the Federal Government's role in providing education and care to children under 6 years old. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is responsible for managing 15 domestic nutrition assistance programs. Its mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. The President's budget for fiscal Year 2006 demonstrates the administration's unwavering commitment to this mission by requesting a record level of $59 billion dollars in new budget authority to administer the nutrition assistance programs.

Over the past half-century, beginning with the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in 1946, the Nation has gradually built an array of unique nutrition assistance programs designed to help the most vulnerable populations meet their food needs. Taken together, the current programs form a nationwide safety net supporting low-income families and individuals in their efforts to escape food insecurity and hunger and achieve healthy, nutritious diets. These programs serve one in five Americans over the course of a year.

The nutrition assistance programs work both individually and in concert with one another to improve the Nation's nutrition and health by improving the diets of children and low-income households. These programs are based on the USDA and Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which are revised every 5 years to ensure Federal nutrition policy is based on current scientific and medical knowledge. Among the programs administered by FNS are:

• The Food Stamp Program (FSP): Authorized by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, the FSP serves as the centerpiece and primary source of nutrition assistance for over 25 million Iow-income people. It enables participants, over 50 percent of whom are children, to improve their diets by increasing food purchasing power using benefits that are redeemed at retail grocery stores across the country. State agencies are responsible for the administration of the program according to national eligibility and benefit standards set by Federal law and regulations. Benefits are 100 percent Federally-financed, while administrative costs are shared between the Federal and State governments. The FSP provides the basic nutrition assistance benefit for low-

income people in the United States while the other FNS programs supplement the program with benefits targeted to special populations, dietary needs, and delivery settings.

• Child Nutrition Programs (CNP): The NSLP, School Breakfast (SBP), Special Milk (SM), Child and Adult Care Food (CACFP), and Summer Food Service (SFSP) Programs provide reimbursement to State and local governments for nutritious meals and snacks served to over 30 million children in schools, child care institutions, after-school care programs, and adult day care centers. FNS provides cash reimbursement and commodities on a per-meal basis to offset the cost of food service at the local level as well as offset a significant portion of State and local administrative expense and provides training, technical assistance, and nutrition education. Reimbursements are substantially higher for meals served free or at a reduced price to children from low-income families.

• Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): WIC addresses the special needs of at-risk, low-income pregnant, breast-feeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to 5 years of age. It provides 8 million participants monthly with supplemental food packages targeted to their dietary needs, nutrition education, and referrals to a range of health and social services; benefits that promote a healthy pregnancy for mothers and a healthy start for their children. Appropriated funds are provided to States for food packages and nutrition services and administration for the program.

• The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): This program provides food purchased by USDA to low-income infants and children up to age 6, low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and to low-income senior citizens who are residing in approved project areas. In recent years, there has been a shift towards low-income elderly in this program; in fiscal year 2004, elderly participation comprised more than 88 percent of total participation.

Federal nutrition assistance programs operate as partnerships between FNS and State agencies and local organizations that interact directly with program participants. States voluntarily enter into agreements with the Federal Government to operate programs according to Federal standards in exchange for program funds that cover benefit costs, as well as a significant portion of administrative expenses.

Under these agreements, FNS is responsible for implementing statutory requirements that set national program standards for eligibility and benefits, providing Federal funding to State agencies and local partners, and monitoring and evaluating to make sure that program structure and policies are properly implemented and effective in meeting program missions. State agencies and local organizations are responsible for delivering benefits efficiently, effectively, and in a manner consistent with national requirements.

Our major goals in administering these programs are:

1. promoting access to and awareness of the programs so that eligible people can participate with dignity and respect;
2. building a HealthierUS with nutrition education and promotion to support healthy weight and healthful behaviors; and
3. enhancing the integrity with which our programs are administered.

In short, Mr. Chairman, these food assistance programs are primarily nutrition programs, helping participants obtain a better diet. They do not overlap with the education programs or with child care programs. They have a clear purpose and distinct function separate from, but complementary to, the goals of targeted education programs and general grants to provide child care services.

One program in particular that interfaces well with other programs that aid early childhood development is the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CAFCP). CACFP plays a vital role in improving the quality of day care and making it more affordable for many low-income families. Each day, 2.9 million children receive nutritious meals and snacks through CACFP. CACFP reaches even further to provide meals to children residing in homeless shelters, and snacks and suppers to youths participating in eligible after-school care programs.

I would like to explain how the CACFP works. FNS administers CACFP through grants to States. The program is administered within most States by the State educational agency. In a few States, it is administered by an alternate agency, such as the State health or social services department; and in Virginia, it is directly administered by the FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office. The child care component and the adult day care component of CACFP may be administered by different agencies within a State, at the discretion of the Governor.

Independent centers and sponsoring organizations enter into agreements with their administering State agencies to assume administrative and financial responsibility for CACFP operations. CACFP reimbursements pay for nutritious meals and

snacks served to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers.

Eligible public or private nonprofit child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, Head Start programs, and other institutions which are licensed or approved to provide day care services may participate in CACFP, independently or as sponsored centers. Meals served to children are reimbursed at rates based upon a child's eligibility for free, reduced price, or paid meals. Under certain rules, for-profit centers may also qualify for this program.

When many people think of "day care" they envision the day care center, in a more formalized setting than a neighbor's home. However, a significant portion of the meals reimbursed in the CACFP are in fact provided by Family Day Care Homes. Let me speak for a moment about how this part of the program works.

A family or group day care home must sign an agreement with a sponsoring organization to participate in CACFP. Day care homes must be licensed or approved by appropriate State agencies to provide day care services. Reimbursement for meals served in day care homes is based upon eligibility criteria established in statute.

The reason I have provided this background is to point out that the grants for this program are not education programs per se nor are they grants to provide child care. However, we do work with our State partners and our Federal partners to make sure that the nutrition programs work together with other resources to provide the best environment possible for young children in day-care settings.

The Food and Nutrition Service is proud of our efforts to coordinate with other Federal agencies to ensure that Federal funds are used to maximize benefit delivery. We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure that the benefits provided under the Child Nutrition Programs are fully integrated into the Head Start Program and the Even Start Program. In fact, Head Start notified Head Start centers of the advisability of participating in the meal services offered under Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). By using CACFP funds to support their food service, Head Start funds that were available for food service are freed for use in important educational activities. Program regulations ensure that children in Head Start and Even Start families are automatically eligible for free meals when they participate in the Child Nutrition Programs. We have worked closely with the Department of Education's 21st century schools to ensure that these programs are aware of the snack service available under the National School Lunch Program. All of our programs, including the WIC Program, have a long history of working with our counterparts in other agencies to ensure that the nutritional assistance offered through the Food and Nutrition Service complements their early education efforts.

In summary, the FNS mission is to provide nutrition assistance in a variety of settings, but not to interfere with nor duplicate the efforts of other Federal and State programs that provide education or child care services. On the contrary, FNS programs enable other programs to operate better by making sure that young children have access to proper nutrition and are ready to learn. This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now we have some time for questions, and I will take 5 minutes and then go to Senator Dodd and Senator Enzi, if that is agreeable.

Mr. Horn, both the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education provide professional development opportunities for teachers, teacher training. Do your agencies work together to provide training for early childhood educators? When you provide training for Head Start teachers, for example, in your Department, do you ever inform the Department of Education about the training opportunity for preschool teachers?

Mr. HORN. Senator, as you know, one of the most important components of the President's Good Start, Grow Smart initiative is to enhance professional development of caregivers in the early childhood arena, be those caregivers parents, Head Start teachers, pre-K teachers, or child care providers, and we have been working aggressively with the Department of Education to ensure that we coordinate our efforts and we do make available training opportunities across a variety of different caregiver categories.

So, for example, when we did our early literacy training of Head Start teachers, we opened up that training to child care providers, as well. So we are committed to trying to have a more integrated professional development and training capacity.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Simon, do you have any comment on that?

Mr. SIMON. Yes, sir. I would just certainly second what he had to say, plus we have conducted—the Department has become more aggressive in direct outreach to teachers through what we call our Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative. Early childhood education is one of the components of that initiative. We have featured programs specifically dealing with early childhood issues at our Teacher-to-Teacher summits and included on our web broadcasts. So we, too, are beginning to focus somewhat more. Also, within title I, we are beginning to encourage States to look at their title I funds and also their title II funds that are used for teacher training to include preschool instruction in that area, too.

Senator ALEXANDER. Teachers in preschool programs, I believe, according to guidance from the Department of Education, don't need to meet the highly qualified teacher standard of No Child Left Behind in most instances, is that correct?

Mr. SIMON. Yes, sir, it is. The only requirement would be if a State, and I believe there are only two that I am aware of, Texas and Oklahoma, that include pre-kindergarten teachers as part of their typical K–12 system. They would be required to include that, but the other States would not.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, a school district might spend part of its title I money on preschool education, but that would not mean that the No Child Left Behind highly qualified teacher requirements applied to its preschool program, is that correct?

Mr. SIMON. That is correct, yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. We will be reauthorizing Head Start in the next few months, we hope, and one of the things we are discussing is whether to require that all Head Start teachers have bachelor degrees. We have to try to take into account the differences that exist in many parts of the country and not produce unreasonable requirements. Do any of you have any advice for us about what should be done in the Head Start legislation about qualifications for preschool educators?

Mr. HORN. I have an opinion on that subject, Senator. There are two competing goods or values when it comes to credentialing of Head Start teachers, and I think it is important for us to find an appropriate balance.

The one is to ensure that we have well-trained teachers in every Head Start classroom who can deliver quality services, and we are committed to doing that. One way to try to get there is to require a certain level of credentialing, and we have worked very hard at helping teachers in Head Start get that credentialing. In fact, about a third of all Head Start teachers today have a bachelor's degree.

But there is another value, and that value has to do with working with the community and helping to develop people within that community, to nurture them and have them develop skills that become marketable. And one way Head Start has historically done

that is by working with individuals, sometimes parents of current or former kids in Head Start, maybe bringing them in as a teacher's aide and training them up and eventually getting them to the point where they have the skills to be a quality Head Start classroom teacher.

My fear is that if we made that a specific credential, that is too high, that Head Start will lose that capacity or at least compromise it, because if you are faced with a choice, you have got to hire a teacher and you are looking on the one hand at somebody who is from the local community who is going to take years to nurture to get to the point where they are well-trained enough to be a good quality Head Start classroom teacher or hiring a 22-year-old kid fresh out of college but has a bachelor's, it is easier to go to the latter.

So I think that while all of us are committed to having quality teachers in Head Start, there is a balance here that we need to achieve. I think we have that balance in the sense that there is a clear direction in the current statute to move teachers toward credentials, but I am afraid that if we have an entry-level mandated credential at too high a level, we are going to lose that ability of nurturing individuals from that community.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much. Mr. Simon, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr. SIMON. I would just say, I think, true, we need to be sensitive to the issues that Mr. Horn has raised, and as far as our Department is concerned, we have increased our conversations with his office, with his Department, especially through our title I office to work to get better content knowledge available to the teachers of the Head Start children. We believe that is a very important skill, knowing the content you teach, and that would be a very important thing for us. And again, we are working with them to try to help get some of that information to the teachers that are there now.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd?

Senator DODD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank our witnesses again for their testimony.

Let me, if I can, Dr. Horn, on the first page of your testimony, at the very bottom of it here, you talk about the amount of funds that are available for child care and related services for children. To quote it here, you say, "When TANF funds are concerned, as well as other State and Federal funding sources, over $11 billion currently is available for child care and related services for children," and that it will provide assistance for some 2.2 million children. That is absolutely accurate. Your numbers are good. I am not questioning your numbers at all.

My concern is that reading that number, it sounds like we are awash in child care funding across the country. Eleven billion is a lot of money, and I am not suggesting it is not. But the impression one could be left with is that the problem isn't adequate resources.

I just wanted to put it in context, if I could, into some perspective, because what we have seen is child care funds over the last 4 years, of course, have been frozen. We have had no increase in the CCDBG program, the Child Care Development Block Grant program, which Senator Hatch and I authored some 20 years ago

now. We have also seen a decline of some, I think it is around $500 million in TANF funds. Then you combine that with what is happening in States across the country. I think New Mexico may be the exception, but most States have huge deficits. I know mine does. I think most States do. They have wrestled with that over the last few years.

So we have seen a declining ability on the part of States to meet obligations, and as a result of that, we have seen, as I mentioned in my opening comments, reduced income eligibility for qualifying families, frozen reimbursement rates in many States, or subsidy rates for providers serving low-income families, increased parent co-pays, and reduced or eliminated funding for quality improvements.

Not every State keeps data. Most do. About half do. But I am going to put this up just for the purposes of people seeing this. As of today, there are some 600,000 children on waiting lists to get into child care. Just to go over these numbers, I was looking down the chart, and I will let my colleagues take a look at this, but every little figure of a child represents 2,000 children. As I say, a lot of States don't even keep data in this area, just don't bother, but to give you an idea, the biggest cases, California, 280,000 on a waiting list in California. In my State, 15,000. In the chairman's State, 20,000. I don't have a number for Wyoming. Wyoming may not be a State that keeps that, or maybe there isn't a waiting list. Some are very small. Arizona, or I guess Arkansas has 1,300, relatively small. In the District of Columbia, 1,400. In Maine, 1,800. But Texas, 26,000. Florida, 48,000. Georgia, 30,000. So you have a very high number of eligible children that are not getting the services.

So I am not arguing with your number at all. Just if you say the number, it can sound like there is no additional need out there, yet between what is happening in States and what we are doing here, what is happening at the national level, I think we are—so my question, I guess, to you is how do we improve the quality of child care as well as retain the current number of children, the 2.2 million you talked about here, without additional resources, I guess is the question I have.

Mr. HORN. Well, first of all, the $11 billion I cited in my testimony, I want to clarify, actually doesn't include Head Start funds, and so when you add Head Start, you are actually up to almost $18.5 billion, and that is a big number. But I am not here to suggest that every single person who would like to have a subsidy gets the subsidy for child care.

When it comes to waiting lists, to a large extent, waiting lists are a reflection of decisions that States make within the flexibilities provided under the Child Care Development Block Grant——

Senator DODD. You are not considering Head Start to be a child care program, are you?

Mr. HORN. Well, if a child is in full-day, full-year Head Start, they can't simultaneously have child care.

Senator DODD. But aren't most Head Start programs part-day, the majority?

Mr. HORN. The best information we have suggests about half—and this is from the parents themselves—half the parents say they are in need of a full-day, full-year experience.

Senator DODD. I know that. I am not questioning that.

Mr. HORN. And half of those get that directly on-site at the Head Start program. So a quarter of the—a half don't need full-day, full-year, according to their parents. The half that do, half of those get it through Head Start directly. The other half get it through certain wrap-around arrangements. They might go to another child care center. They might go home to a parent. They might go home to a family day care provider. There is not a lot of evidence that within the Head Start-served population that there is an inability to provide full-day care and some arrangement for kids who are enrolled. But, of course, that doesn't count kids whose parents don't try to enroll their kids in Head Start because their Head Start didn't serve their needs. But certainly child care can.

So when it comes to waiting lists and child care, it often reflects decision making at the State level about priorities. For example, as you know, the Child Care Development Fund allows subsidies to be given to parents who are at 85 percent of the median State income. In your State, Connecticut, that is about $50,000. Now, if States choose to go all the way up to 85 percent of State median income, they not only include a higher population, but it is less well-targeted to the low-income population.

So I am not here to suggest that this system is flush in money, but I am here to suggest that, to some extent, waiting lists do reflect priorities set within the flexibility given to them by the Child Care Development Fund, and I also do believe that there is an under-enrollment problem in Head Start that is at least partly explained by lack of coordination with State pre-K programs and child care programs.

Senator DODD. Let me get to that, because that is my second question, if I—let me ask just one more, if I can, and that is in your testimony, you talk about the Ohio example and our colleague, Senator Voinovich, when he was Governor. I would argue we had maybe the best child care-Head Start programs in the country. They really were very creative and very imaginative. You mention here that States are taking the initiative to advance the coordination efforts, as well. You cite Ohio as an example, currently launched the Early Learning Initiative.

But then I read what has happened in Ohio with a story last week, or last month, rather, in the Columbus Dispatch and the article points out since Governor Taft, revamping the State-funded Head Start program, enrollment has fallen from 18,000 to 6,500 in that State. Half of Ohio's 88 counties have dropped their programs, unable to meet the new requirements set by the Governor in his program.

Are you familiar with what has happened there? When you are citing Ohio, I am just curious, are you familiar with this?

Mr. HORN. Obviously, what States do with State funds, I don't dictate how they use State funds. But one of the difficulties is that because Head Start is a direct Federal-to-local grant program without any involvement by the State, and child care funds go directly to the State and then are delivered to local agencies who then are accountable to the Federal Government, and State funds go directly from the State to local agencies, they are not well coordinated and that can result in difficulties.

Senator DODD. But you cite the Ohio example as a good example of what has happened——

Mr. HORN. I think that——

Senator DODD. If you go from 18,000 to 6,500, half of the counties in the State are dropping the program, something is wrong.

Mr. HORN. Well, as I say, they have got shifting, or different priorities, but they are, in fact, trying to integrate better their State pre-K programs, their child care programs, and Head Start in a way that makes sense in their State.

Senator DODD. I understand that, but if you are losing—my point is made. I thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Enzi?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again, I appreciate your bringing the three different agencies together that provide the expertise in these child care programs.

I was remembering back to when I was Mayor of Gilette. The President at that time decided that there ought to be some coordination between the Department of Interior and the Department of Energy, and since Gilette, WY, is the energy capital of the Nation—it sits over a coal deposit that has more BTUs of energy than all of the Middle East—I was invited back to testify. I knew that the purpose was to be able to coordinate programs between these two agencies, and when I finished testifying, I actually asked the two under secretaries how they were going to coordinate that and was a little disappointed to have one of the secretaries say, "Well, I don't know about him, but my report is going to be in on time."

[Laughter.]

I am kind of interested in how you work together to compare programs and see what kind of consolidation can be done. Is there any effort underway that way?

Mr. SIMON. One of the efforts is a monthly meeting with this interagency work group between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services and they meet on a very regular basis. Our Secretary Spellings now has taken to a new level, a Secretary-level engagement with the new Secretary Leavitt and Secretary Johanns.

Plus, our own Department within our own agency is being reconfigured to give more emphasis, to give more focus to particularly K–12 initiatives. We look forward again, with Dr. Lyon coming on board, working with the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services specifically in the role of coordinating preschool. Those are a few things that we are doing right now.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks. Mr. Horn?

Mr. HORN. Someone once cynically described coordination in the Federal Government as an unnatural act between nonconsenting adults.

[Laughter.]

I think, however, that the work which the Federal interagency Good Start, Grow Smart work group really belies that cynicism. I think it has done extraordinary work over the last 2, 3 years in really focusing a common vision across two Departments. We have been sharing resources. We have been holding joint conferences. We have been doing joint training. And as Mr. Simon says, we have been holding, at a staff level, monthly meetings.

So I think that we are, in fact, doing a pretty good job of coordinating across the Departments. We have also done a good job, I think, of coordinating with the Department of Agriculture and particularly in regard to the distribution of parent booklets through the Healthy Start, Grow Smart initiative in which parents, particularly low-income parents, get a booklet a month for the first 12 months of a child's life that describes child development, what they can do to help their child.

So I think we have been trying as best we can to better coordinate across three Departments.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I am very encouraged by that. Did you wish to comment on that?

Ms. COLER. I would just like to add that we rely on our Federal partner agencies often to reach eligible populations where we serve similar populations who are participating or eligible to participate in a number of programs. Most recently, we are working with the Department of Education and State Departments of Education to share information about children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and children who participate in the Food Stamp program, to share that information to make sure eligible kids are receiving the benefits they are entitled to.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I have also been a strong supporter of the Government Performance and Results Act. In order to meet the goals of that act, the administration has been using the PART assessment to evaluate programs. How successful is the PART assessment at determining whether or not programs are duplicative and how can Congress support efforts to ensure reviews that the PART take that would make a difference? What can we do?

Mr. SIMON. Speaking from the Department of Education, we do utilize the PART process very rigorously. In fact, many of our budget recommendations this year have been based upon PART results.

As you know, one of the requirements, one of the specific questions that the PART review asks is, is the program designed to be nonredundant or overlapping with another program within the same agency or across agencies? So we look at that very closely.

One of the problems we have in trying to answer that specific question on some of our programs is it is very difficult to tell, particularly when you go out to school districts where the Federal Government's share of funding is only about 8 percent. In some cases, the program might be totally federally funded. In others, the Federal share might be very small. So is that a redundancy or is it not?

So there are a few quirks, I guess, in the PART process, but overall, we are very pleased with it. I don't know of anything else that we could say to do to improve it, to be honest with you.

Mr. HORN. And I also am very supportive of the PART process, and I have had programs that have scored high and programs that have scored low in the PART process. I think that it has been very helpful, for example, in focusing our attention on erroneous payments and developing initiatives to try to assess and reduce erroneous payments in the various programs.

But I don't think the PART process was meant to look across programs to how well they are coordinated with each other. You kind of—you take the program and you examine it on the various

components of the PART process, and this is where I think that the President's interest in using both the Head Start reauthorization and welfare reauthorization to provide tools for States to better integrate programs at the State and local level is so important.

And so I do think it is important that this committee, and I know you are, seriously consider including in Head Start authorization the ability for States to have some ability to better coordinate their pre-K programs with Head Start and child care. They just—right now, basically, unless a Head Start program wants to coordinate with a Governor, they don't have to. There is no requirement for them to do that. And we think that a program that touches so many citizens within a State, the Governor ought to have some say in what happens in that program and at least some levers to be able to get coordination across these various programs that serve similar populations.

And the same is true for welfare reauthorization with the now famously-dubbed "super-waiver" proposal, which is a way to help States to better align different programs so that we can create what all of us have been after for the last 20 years, which is a seamless system of services for low-income families. And you can't do that when you have so many programs that are so categorical, that go to States in different ways, some of which, like Head Start, have no State involvement whatsoever, that have different reporting requirements, different eligibility requirements, different information technology requirements.

I mean, if we want a seamless system of services, we have to give States the tools to get there, and just simply talking about coordination is not enough. It seems to us we need to do something in the context of reauthorization of Head Start and welfare that will allow States to get there.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. That is a very interesting discussion, and let me continue a little bit and from the point of view of somebody who has been accused of never having gotten over having been a Governor.

Of course, there is another way to do that, which would be instead of giving the money to States, is to not involve them at all and make them both federally-run programs. Twenty years ago, I suggested to President Reagan that Medicaid should be wholly run by the Federal Government. I didn't see how the States could run a program that the Federal Government sets the eligibility standards for, denies flexibility to Governors for, and the courts then get involved and try to run it, too. So looking back, that would have been a good idea.

And one of the complications we have, we see with the No Child Left Behind, for example, we have an intention here, for example, more professional development, and I believe my figures are about right. I think in Tennessee, for example, there is a $50 million annual budget item for professional development for Tennessee teachers so they can become more highly qualified. That is a lot of money. I mean, we hear a lot of complaints, there is no money in No Child Left Behind. Well, that is about $800 or $900 for every single Tennessee teacher. If you just take it and give it to them, that is a big pay raise if they got the money.

But they didn't get the money because we gave States the flexibility to deal with it and the States are strapped. Senator Dodd mentioned that. So maybe the State says, well, we want to reduce class size, and so the money ends up over there. So someone comes to see us and says, you are underfunding No Child Left Behind because there is no money for professional development.

I am just thinking out loud here. I agree with you that if we look at these Federal programs that affect children under the age of 6 and that are so huge, I mean, Head Start is $7 billion, child care is $8 billion, something like that, is that about right?

Mr. HORN. Four-point-eight in Federal dollars.

Senator ALEXANDER. Four-point-eight in Federal dollars, but if you include TANF and child care together, it is $4.8?

Mr. HORN. When you include TANF——

Senator ALEXANDER. It would be more like——

Mr. HORN. When you include CCDF, TANF, and SSPG money, it is about $8.4.

Senator ALEXANDER. About eight. So we are talking big bucks. And Senator Dodd also said something about child care. Eighteen years ago, I helped to start a company to provide worksite day care with a fellow named Bob Keeshan, who was Captain Kangaroo, and he said, "Don't ever say child care or day care," he said. "We say child development." And increasingly, even in child care programs, we are talking about child development. And increasingly in Head Start, we are talking not just about a place for children to go, we are talking about cognitive learning. So increasingly, we are talking about giving parents more options, choices of places to go to get child development, whether it is through the vouchers that are for child care or Head Start programs which are autonomous.

Let me ask you a question then about this sort of ramble. At a meeting of chief State school officers just now where there is considerable sympathy for the administration's position, which is that States—to make these programs coordinate, States have to be more involved some way.

One of the suggestions by a chief State school officer from South Carolina was that a step toward that would be to have training grants from the Department of Education or HHS to State boards of education for preschool teachers. In other words, let the States have some money to work with preschool and child care teachers to help improve their training and capability and that would be one way of getting the State more involved as a coordinator of better services for children under 6. Is that going on, or what do you think of that proposal, either, any of you?

Mr. SIMON. States now have the right to utilize title I funds for preschool activities. They also, the title II professional development funds, there is some $5 billion in the current budget for teacher-related services. I believe that those can be used for preschool, and then certainly our Teacher-to-Teacher. As I indicated, we have expanded our Teacher-to-Teacher workshops to include preschool reading, preschool math type of activities for teachers so that they really understand what it is the children need to know and how to better coordinate that with——

Senator ALEXANDER. If you will excuse me, I will follow this and then we will take—does this ever include Head Start teachers?

Mr. SIMON. Sir, I would have to check that. I am not sure.

Senator ALEXANDER. Would that be something that we should consider or that your working group should consider, is involving—I have one example of, I think Rutherford County in—well, Charlotte Menklenberg uses lots of its No Child Left Behind money in preschool, as I understand. The theory is, if the children arrive better ready to learn, they will do better on the annual yearly test.

Mr. SIMON. Right, and I know a number of our grants that we give do, in fact, require cooperation, participation of Head Start in those grants. Early Reading First, for example, requires participation—or if a Head Start program is there, that they must be a part of that. If Head Start is not there, then other public or private providers are eligible, and that same thing is true with a number of our other grants. I am just not sure about the title II moneys.

Senator ALEXANDER. Dr. Horn?

Mr. HORN. And I am not sure of that, either, in terms of the use of title II moneys. But it is something that I think is a good suggestion——

Senator ALEXANDER. But in terms of training for Head Start teachers, would you have any—the objective of getting States more involved, finding different ways for the Governor to get more involved with the Head Start programs so the programs can be better coordinated with teacher training programs administered by the Governor or additional Federal dollars for that to be useful, or does it sound like enough is already being done there?

Mr. HORN. Well, we believe that there is plenty of training and technical assistance money in Head Start, but that is a separate issue as to whether or not joint or cross-training of different early child care providers would be a good thing. I think it would be a good thing. I think we are trying to move in that direction.

As I noted in my testimony, one of the things that we have done in the Child Care Development Fund program is the State plans that are required to be submitted. We have asked that States submit sort of a Good Start, Grow Smart section that concentrates on, first of all, what they have been doing to develop early learning guidelines, second, what they are doing to develop sort of coordinated professional development systems. And about 29 States now are in the process of implementing those Statewide sort of coordinated professional development systems.

So we are making progress in that regard and that will help. But at the end of the day, it seems to us that it is still going to be important if you have got a child care center on one corner, a Head Start center across the street, and a State pre-K program on the other corner, that they ought to be coordinated in some fashion so they are not fighting all for the same kids.

And I am not suggesting, again, that the system is flush with money. What I am saying is that when you are not coordinating those three systems, what happens is you get pockets where you have too many slots for the kids that are available and other areas where you have too few slots, and coordination allows you to create greater efficiency. You can serve more kids.

When I came into office, we had a 7 percent under-enrollment rate in Head Start. That is 62,000 federally-funded slots with no child in them. We have reduced that to about 4 percent now

through a variety of administrative actions that we have done, but part of the difficulty in eliminating that problem is the difficulty in coordinating Head Start with pre-K and child care programs the way that we think we ought to do and we think that the Governors need to have some say in that. However we can move toward that goal is something we would be very supportive of.

Senator ALEXANDER. I will come back to that, but Senator Dodd, please take whatever time you want.

Senator DODD. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I am not arguing with the idea of how to get more efficient and make the system work. I don't disagree with that at all. I think we have got to be careful, though, to some extent when we start talking about Head Start and child care as early child development programs. That is where the similarity sort of ends. I mean, those are very different.

The Child Care Development Block Grant program, I would have very much liked to have seen early on that we have developmental standards included, but there was no way in the world we were going to get that done at the time, even today. We have health and safety standards, but that is about it. Any effort we made to set additional developmental standards or qualities that teachers ought to have and so forth coming in was vehemently opposed at the time and has been over the years.

Head Start, on the other hand, of course, has extensive quality standards, some 1,800 requirements, am I correct? I think it is about 1,800 requirements to be met. So I presume if it is going to be State-run, unless there are some of those you are going to get rid of, we have studied Head Start to death over the last number of years in terms of the amount of reviews that have been made of the program. So I think it is important to kind of—and, in fact, Head Start has far many more standards to it than most State pre-K programs, as well.

So you are right. You go through them on the corner here, but they are very different requirements there. So leveling the playing field a bit there would be a tremendous help to some degree. If we could get more developmental standards in child care, it would be something I would like to see. I just don't know if you are going to get our colleagues to go along with those kind of things because of the resistance.

Another problem, again with States, and again, Connecticut is a very affluent State. We are always right near the top in terms of per capita earnings. I always like to quickly point out that Hartford, Connecticut, our capital, is listed as the poorest city in America, by the way. In a State that is the size of San Diego County or Yellowstone National Park, I have great affluence. I have significant poverty in that State, as well.

Of course, our system, while there is State support, so much of it is dependent on local community resources and we are just going—the ability to have supporting things like class size and teacher training and all these things we would like to do. What is being cut out of my elementary school programs, I think 8 percent today—I think I am correct, correct me if I am wrong, but only 8 percent of elementary school kids have any requirement of physical education today. We are wondering about the rise in diabetes and

other things and obesity problems and so forth. And not because people think it is a bad idea to have physical education. There just are not the resources to do all that is required.

And I am glad the chairman raised the No Child Left Behind Act because, again, I am a strong supporter of the goals of that bill, having been here and part of the decision. I don't have any problem with the goals of that. But obviously, the reasonableness, and today there is a meeting, in fact, between the Secretary of Education and my commissioner to try and see if they can't work out some of these issues in terms of how often people are tested in our State and the requirements under No Child Left Behind. But the pressures are huge on these States and the resources there.

Trying to get the States more involved, it is hard to argue with that, but if we are going to get them more involved, we have got to be very conscious of the ability to actually step up and meet these financial obligations, given where most of the resources come from. That is one of my concerns.

I am not going to sit here and try to suggest to you that building more efficiencies into the system is a bad idea. It is not at all. We need to be doing that all the time. I just want us to carefully do it and understand there are differences and different requirements today that we require of Head Start, of child care, and State pre-K programs.

Mr. HORN. May I just remark about something about that?

Senator DODD. Sure.

Mr. HORN. In the President's proposal to allow a limited number of States to better coordinate Head Start and pre-K programs and child care programs at their option, it is often assumed that what will happen is that if there is a difference between State standards in a State pre-K program and Head Start and if Head Start standards are higher, that this will drive the standards of Head Start down.

What is often overlooked in the President's proposal is that we have a requirement that for kids served with Head Start funds, those programs must continue to meet or exceed the current Head Start standards. We actually believe—so you are kind of cementing in the Head Start standards for kids served with Head Start funds. We think this is an opportunity where there is discrepancy to actually drive up the standards in State pre-K programs.

So far from trying to water down the quality of services to kids, we actually think the State option has the potential, unproven at this point, to be sure, but the potential to actually drive up the quality of State pre-K programs if the State pre-K programs are not meeting the same quality standards that the Head Start programs are.

Senator DODD. That is an interesting observation. I would hope you are right. My concern is, and I suspect it may be yours, as well, that, again, as we do that, putting in requirements cost money, and if it costs money, that is going to mean you are going to end up with this problem, and we talk about in terms of waiting lists and so forth and who gets into these programs. You sort of get burned either way. Do you want the quality to go up? If we are not going to be willing to help pay those costs and defer that, to some degree, given State budgets and the demands on them, it gets harder and

your population, the eligible population shrinks and you leave an awful lot of kids out.

But you may be right. Look, it turns out that the opposite happens, it would be fantastic if that were the case. I just worry, the realities being what they are, and knowing what Governors and State legislative bodies go through—and good people out there. These are not people who are opposed to these things. They care about them very much. But, boy, they have got an awful lot of demands on them and it is hard to meet those obligations.

Senator ALEXANDER. I recall that I used to bristle a good bit when people would say things like, we turned it over to you. You are going to all compete to see how bad you can do, where that really wasn't the way we looked at it. We competed—and I served with Bill Clinton and Dick Reilly and Bob Graham and we competed to see who could have the best program that we could. It was a race to the top, not the bottom.

But let me pursue this discussion a minute. You have been a very effective defender of the President's proposal and I am sympathetic to the idea of finding some way to get, maybe the President's way, some way of getting the States more involved. I think it is useful to think about the three, the Head Start center, the preschool program maybe for a 4-year-old on another corner, and a day care center across the street. You have got Federal dollars and you are spending $7,000 per child at the Head Start center, all Federal. You have got a Federal voucher that takes you to the child care center. And then you have got a preschool program that may include 4-year-olds which is going to be funded almost exclusively by State and local dollars.

One of the things we talked about last year was creating a number of Early Childhood Centers of Excellence that would—in fact, it was in the Senate bill. It would allow the Governors to designate, let us say in Nashville, you take all those preschool places, the Head Start centers and the day care centers, and the Governor comes forward to Wade Horn and said, or your Secretary, and said, "We want to designate or we want to show the world what can happen when we voluntarily—the Head Start people, child care parents, and the school systems—work together to spend this money better." And then the Secretary would then designate that as an Early Childhood Center of Excellence. There might be additional funds for that, depending on what the program was, the State putting in some money, the Federal Government putting in some money. We may think of more things to add on to it. And then we would see how that went for 3 or 4 years, and from that we might learn more ways for States to solve this problem.

That seemed to create broader support, at least from the Head Start community. They felt less threatened by this proposal. It didn't go as far as the President wanted to go in terms of his 10-State pilot program. Would you have any comment on how we might be able to strengthen the early childhood development, Early Childhood Centers of Excellence idea and bring it closer to the administration's objectives and still find something that we could create a consensus on here within the Congress?

Mr. HORN. Well, first, to state the obvious, I think that the present proposal is a good one. I am very supportive of it.

Senator ALEXANDER. And you have effectively defended it. No, I mean that sincerely.

Mr. HORN. I also think that there are other reasonable options to be considered. I am not here to say that there are no places where good coordination is happening. I think there are. And we can always learn from good exemplary situations in order to then disseminate that——

Senator DODD. I think you ought to check on that Ohio example that you cite here as a great example.

Mr. HORN. I will check on that.

Senator DODD. You might have a better one for us the next testimony.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HORN. And we actually have an example of us doing this in a coordinated way with the Department of Education already, and that is with the two State roundtables that we have had where we have taken the 10 States that we think are farthest along at implementing some of the aspects of Good Start, Grow Smart and then using the learnings from those roundtables to then determine what the next best training ought to be with the rest of the States to bring them along.

So I think there certainly is value to the idea of finding good examples and then having a process to disseminate those. But at the end of the day, it still seems to me that Governors need some leverage in forcing that coordination, and I would suggest that this committee look to the Abbott School Districts, so-called Abbott Districts in New Jersey to see a situation where that coordination is not happening well and where the State is frustrated because that coordination is not happening well.

Senator ALEXANDER. I am going to ask Ms. Coler a question, and then we will go for any further questions that Senator Dodd has or comments he has, and then I think we will bring the hearing to a conclusion.

Ms. Coler, the Department of Agriculture structure providing services to children is a little different than the way we do it in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Basically, the Federal money—it is more like the way we do it with the child care certificate or voucher and less like the way we do it with U.S. Department of Education grants to schools. In other words, the Department of Agriculture money follows the child, it seems to me, to wherever the child is, and then if the child is at this place, you pay for that. The Department puts the Federal money there.

Is there anything, as we talk about coordinating these three different kinds of buildings on different corners and hoping that we serve the children well—anything we can learn from the Department of Education model about how it spends its money that might apply to this better coordinated system?

Ms. COLER. Well, our programs, while they are federally funded, are State administered, and we want to make sure that children, no matter what setting they are receiving through early childhood education, whether they are in school or a summer food service program, that they have access to that now. So while it does follow the child, it is actually administered by the State and reimbursement is from the State to the provider. But if the children are enti-

tled, we want to make sure that they have access to those meals, no matter what setting they are in, so——

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd, I am very interested to see if we can find some ways to allow Governors in areas show us what can be done. I mean, I think if I were back in the Governor business, and Senator Dodd may not like this, but I would probably try to persuade a Head Start center and a school district and group of parents to let us operate a whole series of programs. Let the parent choose the school, the child care service, or the combination that they needed. Attract the maximum amount of dollars, such as the Department of Agriculture dollars, and let the money follow the children to the schools and the services they needed.

And then looking at where the parents chose to go, which is what we do with the child care voucher today. We then could try to decide what are the training programs for the teachers in the various programs and how can we effectively spend the money, because we would have about $7,000 for each Head Start child. We would have a range of $2,000, $3,000, $4,000, $5,000 a year for the child care voucher. The State is probably spending more than that for preschool education. So that is quite a bit of money that could go into the pot and it would bring out the creative imagination, I imagine, of lots of Governors and lots of Head Start center directors.

I am very interested in finding some way that Congress can support the President's objective there.

Senator Dodd?

Senator DODD. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. And again, I don't think they are contradictory goals. I mean, obviously, getting parents involved and trying to be more efficient in how we provide these services is critically important, and giving parents more involvement. In fact, one of the Head Start requirements is parental involvement. We have about 80 percent parental involvement with Head Start programs. It drops to less than 20 percent by the time the kids are in the first grade because we don't require it other places.

I mean, had it not been—it is kind of easy to talk about these requirements that the Federal Government has placed in these areas, but I think over the years, we have proved to be more right than wrong in setting these standards, and I am not sure—looking at child care, we have got virtually none. We have better standards for people's pets than we do for children in some of these places, other than basic safety standards and so forth.

So it is very easy to sort of attack the Federal Government in this area, and obviously Governors feel that way. As a former Governor, I know I felt restrained probably in more cases than I would care to know. The Federal Government was requiring things, and allowing States to be a bit more imaginative in how they would provide for their families is important.

And I say this and I mean this very deeply. Unfortunately, not every Governor was Lamar Alexander in the country. We had people out there who really understood this and cared about this stuff and would insist as a Governor that these kids were going to have requirements and standards were going to be met, and too often, that is not the case.

And so if we are talking about Federal dollars going back out, we want to make sure that these dollars are going to do what we

want them to do to the extent possible and invite creativity and imagination, try to do what we can do to make sure these dollars are efficiently used, so we maximize them to the extent possible, and that is not easy in doing all of these things.

But I welcome the discussion. I think it is important to have it. I don't think anything ought to reach a status that it is static and they are not willing to examine how you can do a better job all the time.

The demands are more complicated today. Just what parents are going through is so much more, so much more difficult than it was 20, 30 years ago, and I think we have got to be cognizant of that. It is hard. You are teasing me about being a new father with a 6-week-old and a three-and-a-half-year-old, who I took to a preschool program this morning and will pick her up in about an hour or so from it. She does about 3 days a week. She is three-and-a-half. And how lucky we are. I mean, we have the resources to be able to do this, although it is expensive, I will tell you, and what is available.

But just pressures on families today, trying to make ends meet economically, and look at some of these dollar amounts we are talking about and what constitutes a poverty figure if you can then qualify for any help. I went down the numbers in some of the States and they are just very, very low. I mean, you are making $35,000 and you have got three kids and you are no longer qualified. You are no longer in poverty. Well, you are not maybe poor, you are not poverty stricken, but if you try to put food on the table and provide shelter and clothes and also educate these kids with $35,000, it is tough. So it is important we do this.

I was just going to ask Ms. Coler about your program. I am a strong supporter of these child and adult care food programs. I would just like to see even more family day care homes participate, if they could, because I think it is a great program. It is, again, one of these things where Federal dollars can make such a difference. I wonder if you have any suggestions on how we could be more effective in outreach within communities to achieve that goal.

Ms. COLER. Working with partners always helps, and we have had some experience with the Department of Health and Human Services where they from Washington notified all the Head Start centers about the advisability of participating in our program, not only for the benefit of food that it brings to the child who is participating, but it also frees up money for other education activities. So with all of our programs, the ACFP, Food Stamps, WIC, we are undertaking major outreach efforts to try to reach all eligibles and trying to streamline the administration so providers will be willing participants, as well.

Senator DODD. Well, that is great. Thanks for that.

And again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank our witnesses. I just want to make the point, and Dr. Horn, who is very knowledgeable about all these things and I appreciate your—we have dealt with each other a lot over the years on these questions.

Again, going back to that issue of the standards, the Head Start standards, I mean, as I understood in the law, the word is "generally meet" the standards. There is not a specific requirement that the Head Start standards be met. And I understand that getting down too specific maybe, but I was looking for maybe a stronger

word than "generally meet." It seems to me almost to be an invitation to sort of dumb-down the system rather than reach up to it. I would hope that we might look at that language so that we are driving States, and then really keep an eye if this becomes law on what States are doing and what costs are associated with meeting those standards and what the effects are in terms of serving eligible populations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd. I believe title I dollars used for preschool are required to meet Head Start standards. I believe that is also correct.

This has been a very helpful beginning to our discussion. Dr. Horn, Mr. Simon, Ms. Coler, we want to make effective use of your time and the Departments' time. I know that you will be having an ongoing review of these programs. You have your own working group, and we not only don't want to interfere with that, we want to encourage that.

I think what we would like to do here is find an effective way to keep up with it, not necessarily through big hearings on broad subjects where you repeat what you have already said before, but if I could ask you to work with our staff here and let us set up a flexible schedule, say, over the next year and at two or three different intervals, what I would like to do is for us to meet with you again. It might just be an hour's discussion around the table. It might be more focused on a particular issue.

You may have a specific proposal you would like—I mean, this is an invitation, really. You may have something that you think we have been too busy to understand, and while we have got a consensus here toward an objective, if you want to get our attention toward a specific legislative change, that would be a good way to do it, or if we need to put the spotlight on something you need done, then that would be a way for us to do that, too, or we need to invite some people in who are stakeholders and have a general discussion.

So I would like to use the combination of our interests here over the next year to do what we can to spend this money as wisely as possible. And, of course, Senator Dodd, it may show that some money is not being spent wisely. It may show some additional needs that will require more money, and there would be no stronger case for additional dollars than a year-long review that turned that up.

I thank Senator Dodd for being here and other Senators, and I thank each of you for coming, and the meeting is adjourned.

Senator DODD. Could I just——

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes, sure.

Senator DODD. I should have mentioned this. There have been a lot of groups out there that are doing surveys on this wait list issue, and we have asked the Government Accountability Office to take a look at this, as well, state-by-state. We expect to have some answers back from the GAO around June sometime, which may be helpful to throw some light on this subject matter.

Senator ALEXANDER. Good.

Senator DODD. I think your point about title I meeting Head Start educational component standards is absolutely true, but what

they don't do is they are not required to meet the standards on nutrition and other factors that Head Start requires, so there is a difference. Educational performance level, but not the others, and that is a gap, clearly, in these areas.

Senator ALEXANDER. If we have additional questions, if we may send them to you within the next 2 or 3 days to complete our record, we will do that. Thank you for your time.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:33 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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