

It is a success story. It is the duty of Congress to protect the current and future security of our Nation, and we must start with our children. And we must help the children of our migrant workers that are at risk, our youth and their parents. By supporting Head Start in its present form, we will be doing just that, securing our Nation by securing our children as they start their educational program.

I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, you have heard brilliant presentations, comprehensive presentations from the members of the Congressional Black Caucus here this evening who have identified the value of Head Start: the fact that Head Start provides nutrition, the fact that it provides physical examinations, the fact that it prepares young people for education, the fact that it involves parents and gets them involved in helping to determine the educational destiny of their children, the fact that Head Start gets communities involved.

Mr. Speaker, this cannot be taken lightly. Head Start is indeed a successful program that has been in this country now for 38 years. Many children and families have benefited from this program, children from all over America, from communities all over this country. We value Head Start, and we appreciate all of those who had the vision to bring this valuable program to this Nation.

Again, we think that this program should not be tampered with. There is no reason to want to block grant this program. We would like to think that it is just a misunderstanding, that this administration really does not understand the risk that they are creating by tampering with this program and block granting it to the States.

Let me just tell you, Mr. Speaker, in addition to not having the requirements to go along with block grants, the one thing that strikes me as extremely detrimental to this program is the fact that nowhere in this block granting does it require that the parental involvement component remain with Head Start.

Many of us wax eloquently about parental involvement and family values and what it means for parents to be involved with their children and their education, but yet we see an attempt to change a program that has a strong component of parental involvement, an attempt to dismantle a program that has worked.

Mr. Speaker, Head Start will be reauthorized this year. It will not have all of the money that it needs. It will only have a small increase. There will still be children waiting to get into Head Start. But one way or the other, I know that this program is going to be reauthorized. I hope that it is done in the traditional, bipartisan fashion in which our children are not left behind.

However, H.R. 2210 suggests that we are off to a very bad start. It would be a tragedy if the Republican leadership chooses to try and force this bad bill through for partisan political purposes. We can and must do better than H.R. 2210. I urge the Republican leadership to heed the will of the American people and produce a bipartisan bill that both sides of the aisle can support. Millions of lives depend on Head Start, and we cannot afford to let them down.

This Congress has been criticized, Members on the opposite side of the aisle, who somehow cut out the poorest and most vulnerable families from the tax bill. We cannot afford to continue to have the kind of criticism and distrust that is mounting of this Congress over what appears to be an assault on families and children.

We have the issue of the child tax credit before us. It is shameful what has been done. I do not think that all of the Republicans on the other side of the aisle support what has been done. I do not think that they believe in what some of the leadership is saying about poor people not deserving to have this tax break.

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I believe that there are those on the other side of the aisle that will join with us on this side of the aisle and put an end to this attempt to undermine our Head Start program.

Mr. Speaker, I am so blessed, and I feel so blessed, to be able to be here tonight to speak on behalf of the children and to stand up for Head Start. I feel so blessed to have been a part of Head Start and to have learned what it means to invest in our children. I feel so blessed to have learned that we can indeed make our children successful in their education experience.

Many of those children who are being left behind are being left behind because they do not have the value of an early childhood education. I am delighted to have been a part of this evening.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have come to the floor this evening to express my concern about the lack of funding by this administration's to our nation's education programs and I wanted to share with my colleagues how this budget matches up with the priorities of the people I represent.

On yesterday, in a beautiful ceremony in the Rose Garden, President Bush hosted an event marking the progress, significant progress toward making sure every child in public schools gets a quality education.

Now, I am sure that made a great story on last evening's news, but Head Start is more than just news for the nearly 20 million families who have benefited from the program. It is real life. Head Start provides the most comprehensive program for children of low income, working families. In a recent study by the Family and Child Experiences Survey, the findings concluded that children are ready to learn. Another study concluded that Head Start narrowed the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers in vocabulary and writing skills during the program year.

I am here today because of this Administration's plans to dismantle this vital program by turning it over to struggling states. It baffles me why such a move would be necessary. Currently, the program provides federal grants directly to community organizations, allowing for local flexibility and strong federal oversight of Head Start's quality. If Head Start is turned over to states' during this time of economic uncertainty, it is very likely they will use Head Start funding to fill gaps in their own programs.

Mr. Speaker, the Head Start program not only involves the child but also recognizes the importance of the family. Head Start has included parents in both the child's education and their membership in the Head Start Policy Council. I have received numerous letters from teachers, parents, and other employees of the Sunnyview and Greater Head Start locations in my district of Dallas, Texas. Each one pleading for additional funding and urging the program to be kept in its current structure. One parent writes, "they teach them how to write, count, their ABC's, to draw, to be responsible Many families feel comfortable with this program because they can come in and volunteer in the classes and see what the children are learning."

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would consider listening to the countless voices of children that Head Start prepares for the foundation of their critical learning years. How can we deny them a chance at a decent future? I submit to you, that we cannot. It is our duty as federal lawmakers, that every child is prepared with a quality education so they can be productive citizens of this nation.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1115, CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS ACT OF 2003

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-148) on the resolution (H. Res. 269) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1115) to amend the procedures that apply to consideration of interstate class actions to assure fairer outcomes for class members and defendants, to outlaw certain practices that provide inadequate settlements for class members, to assure that attorneys do not receive a disproportionate amount of settlements at the expense of class members, to provide for clearer and simpler information in class action settlement notices, to assure prompt consideration of interstate class actions, to amend title 28, United States Code, to allow the application of the principles of Federal diversity jurisdiction to interstate class actions, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION RELATING TO CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 1308, TAX RELIEF, SIMPLIFICATION, AND EQUITY ACT OF 2003

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-149) on the