

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) for the leadership that they have shown and displayed.

I just left the markup in the Committee on Education and the Workforce where we have been babbling, I guess one could say, all day long. We have been debating Head Start. And there are certain principles that we have tried to maintain, and one is that the program must be kept comprehensive. It must remain comprehensive and not be streamlined and categorized so that young people will get the full benefit of the most effective program that we have had coming out of the civil rights movement, coming out of the war on poverty. No other program has been as successful as this one.

We also have to make sure that the block granting does not creep in, and we have obviously crept up, and they are down to talking about eight States now that would be demonstration projects, but we have got to watch that because those eight States will still represent one-third of all the children in Head Start.

So if we are talking about eight States with large populations, with large populations of Head Start children, then that becomes a significant number. We are still opposed to the block granting all the way.

We know that we need additional funding, especially as we now have a mandate that 50 percent of the teachers ought to have a college degree by 2008. But how does one get a college degree if one is a Head Start teacher making \$12,000, \$15,000, \$10,000, \$11,000, \$14,000 a year without some help. So we are proposing stipends and scholarships, things that are going to help those individuals.

And I was pleased to note that I did get an amendment accepted a few minutes ago that will call for the creation of a fatherhood initiative, and I noticed that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) mentioned that, as a father, we find that many fathers are absent from the lives of their children and that one of the things that we can do in Head Start is stimulate the growth and development of that.

So I just, again, want to commend all of my colleagues here, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) as he leads the Congressional Black Caucus, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), and it was good to see the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ), chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and I know that the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is here, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) who has been doing an outstanding job in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, we have been there together all day. So I think the chairman so much.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. The Congressional Black Caucus is very concerned about this issue along with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and sometimes I think what happens is so often people will hear the words Congressional Black Caucus or hear the towards Congressional Hispanic Caucus and think that we are only addressing issues that affect African American and Hispanic people. That is simply not true. The issues that we address go to the very center of people's lives, and I can think of nothing greater that allows a person to be all that they can be than health issues, making sure they have prescriptions that they need and making sure that our children have the education that they need so that they can get to their destiny.

I have often said that our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see, and the question is what kind of message do we send if we deny a child who was born into poverty? That child did not ask to be born into poverty, but he is born into poverty or she, and so that child has a struggle from the very, very beginning. And I think that if we can help a child at 3 years old and give that child a proper foundation so that they could then go forward in life and have what I call consistent appointments with success, then that child grows up, and that child possibly could be the person who finds a cure to pancreatic cancer or could become the President of the United States.

But when they are denied that opportunity at an early age, then so often they go off the road as a straight and narrow path, and the next thing we know, we see them as I see them in my district, so many of them dropping out of school, so many of young ladies having babies as teenagers, and we see the problems that they are confronted with. And Head Start is a program, Mr. Speaker, that has effectively addressed those problems, and again with regard to the prescription drugs, we have to stand up for our seniors.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

□ 1815

PRESERVING HEAD START

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANKS of Arizona). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, to a number of people around the coun-

try it is approximately 15 minutes after 6 in the East, about a quarter after 5 in my neck of the woods in central Alabama; and a lot of people are coming home right now from working on the assembly lines, a lot of people are coming from working in the nursing homes and the places where hard work is done in this country, and a lot of them picked up their children from Head Start.

A lot of them are coming home now, and they are watching this debate, and they are asking a very basic question: Why is this House even assessing the question of Head Start? Why is this House even talking about dismantling Head Start, when in their own lives they see this program has been so enormously successful?

There is an old maxim that if something is not broke, you do not fix it; and the perspective of a large number of people I represent in Birmingham, Alabama, and Selma and Tuscaloosa and in all of the rural counties in my State is that this has been a part of the War on Poverty that has endured. This program, which was launched in the 1960s, has endured, it has survived, and it has notably commanded bipartisan support.

As I talk to friends of mine on the other side of the aisle, particularly friends of mine who have served in State legislatures, a good many of them away from this floor will express that this is a program that has been successful.

So many people wonder why, as we talk about reform, as we talk about changing the educational system in this country, why we are targeting this particular program; and I will make three basic points to follow up on what my very able colleagues from Maryland and California said earlier.

The first one is that this program has been an enormously effective holistic program. It has been a program that has helped not simply make children more literate, but has frankly helped to make children better young men and women, better equipped to participate in school, better equipped to live in their communities.

It is not simply a reading program, it is not simply a literacy program, and to try to limit it or to cabinet it to just those areas deprives the program of some of its potential.

Another very basic point, as we talk about block granting this program even for just eight states, we know the reality of block grants has been that as the programs devolved to the States, the States are often unconstrained in how they spend the money. They are often unconstrained in their vision of how the money should be spent.

I know in my State of Alabama we are facing enormous budget consequences now, and in the States most of us represent our States are fiscally struggling. They are not asking for more programs to be put on their plate from an administrative or financing standpoint. If anything, they want