A key component of this legislation is wetland restoration. In Illinois, wetlands provide protective habitats for the forty percent of the state's endangered species and help stave off major flooding. Unfortunately, a staggering ninety percent of Illinois' wetlands have been destroyed. Through grants provided by the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, 68 acres of rare wetlands in the northeastern Illinois' Nature Preserves were restored. Another eight wetland restoration projects were undertaken in the Chicago area. We must provide the authorization and management to continue such restoration and reverse the rapid rate of wetland destruction around the Great Lakes.

I want to thank Chad Lord from the Healing Our Waters—Great Lakes Coalition, Cameron Davis of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, and all the other organizations that work tirelessly on behalf of our environment and the Great Lakes. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation so that we may continue our mission to provide for the long-term sustainability of this treasured ecosystem.

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GME SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to reauthorize the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Program. Seven years ago, Congress established this program to provide the federal support needed for training activities at our children's teaching hospitals. In other hospital settings, training dollars needed for residents are funded, in part, through Medicare's graduate medical education program. With relatively few Medicare patients being served at children's hospitals, however, children's teaching hospitals cannot fully benefit from Medicare's graduate medical education program. CHGME was established to help alleviate the inequity faced by children's hospitals with respect to the training of their residents.

Since its inception in 1999, the CHGME program has achieved tremendous success and enabled our children's teaching hospitals to address reductions in the number of pediatric residents. With this funding, children's teaching hospitals—such as Texas Children's Hospital in my hometown of Houston—have been able to keep their residency programs ali ve and ensure that the pediatricians treating our children and our grandchildren are trained at the best facilities in the country.

It's no surprise that the same children's teaching hospitals receiving CHGME funds provide the ideal training grounds for pediatric residents. These hospitals house the Nation's leading pediatric research institutions and provide residents with experience in treating the whole range of childhood health care problems, from routine immunizations to pediatric trauma care and pediatric oncology.

Continued CHGME funding is critical if our children's hospitals can continue providing quality care to low-income children, as well as children whose families have private health insurance. Nearly 50 percent of care delivered at our children's hospitals nationwide is provided to Medicaid beneficiaries, and CHGME payments help cover the gap created by a Medicaid reimbursement policy that covers only 80 percent of care delivered to Medicaid patients.

The CHGME program provides children's teaching hospitals with real funding, without which their residency programs would face severe financial strain. Texas Children's Hospital in Houston is one of the top children's hospitals in the country and received nearly $11 million last year in CHGME payments. Even with this funding, Texas Children's absorbed an additional $11.5 million in unreimbursed costs associated with their training of pediatric residents.

We want our pediatricians trained at quality hospitals like Texas Children's, where they can put their skills to use on a diverse set of patients. Through this type of education and training, pediatric residents can leave children's teaching hospitals and travel to all corners of the country armed with the experience to effectively treat the young patients in their community. CHGME makes this possible, and I encourage my colleagues to support the reauthorization of this important program.

TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH GHELETA

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Elizabeth Gheleta on her tireless devotion to assisting jail inmates and their families in San Mateo County, located in my Congressional District. For 38 years, and for the past 28 years as Executive Director of the San Mateo Service League, Ms. Gheleta has committed herself to ensuring that San Mateo County provide opportunities for positive change to county jail inmates, former inmates and their families. Under her direction, the Service League has made San Mateo County a safer place to live by offering inmates the skills and support necessary to successfully reintegrate into the community.

Over the years, Ms. Gheleta has built the San Mateo Service League into a well-established, non-profit community organization with 25 staff members and over 500 volunteers. Equally important has been her effectiveness in winning the trust and support of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, which has cooperated and helped finance many of the Service League's innovative programs. Among these are the Windows of Opportunity to find effective alternatives to incarceration, Hope Houses and Project Hope for alcohol and drug treatment, and the Children's Waiting Room at the County Jail. With the support of San Mateo County Sheriff Don Horsley, the Service League has promoted the expansion of in-jail services, including education, religious services, substance abuse counseling, and re-entry to society life skills. Ms. Gheleta and her staff also developed four residential facilities for former inmates and started programs to assist the children and families of inmates.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in thanking Elizabeth Gheleta for her contribution to the improvement of our community in San Mateo County. Ms. Gheleta's vision and dogged determination has resulted in model programs that have addressed important social issues such as chemical dependency, personal responsibility, education, permanent housing and family life skills. The reality of this vision has truly given hundreds of former inmates and their families a second chance in life. I am truly delighted and inspired by Ms. Gheleta's commitment to our community.