

ORGAN DONATION

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, recently, we celebrated National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week and today I recognize the medical advances that have made organ transplantation a viable treatment option. Thanks to those who have given the gift of life, more than 20,000 individuals received an organ transplant in 1996.

However, each year, the number of organs donated in the United States falls tragically short of the need. Sadly, more than 55,000 people are on the national organ transplant waiting list and about 10 will die each day as the waiting lists continue to grow.

Organ donation is increasing, but not fast enough to come close to meeting the need. In recent years, progress has been made in creating awareness of the need for organ donation. Most Americans indicate they support organ donation. Nonetheless, only about 50 percent of families asked to donate a loved one's organs agree to do so. Moreover, thousands of opportunities to donate are missed each year, either because families do not know what their loved ones wanted, or because potential donors are not identified for organ procurement organizations and their families are never asked.

To address these barriers to donation, government and private sector partnerships must be focused on * * *

* * * that we from government and the private sector. But most importantly, we need volunteers willing to share the gift of life. To achieve this goal, there must be an emphasis on increasing consent to donation and referrals to organ procurement organizations.

However, we must also ensure that our social and work environments are amenable to persons serving as donors. That is why I urge support of my legislation H.R. 457, the Organ Donor Leave Act, which would provide federal employees an additional 7 days to serve as a bone-marrow donor, and 30 days to serve as an organ donor.

Passage of this measure would stand as a model for private employees to amend their personnel policies to grant additional paid leave to living donors who give bone marrow, a kidney, or other organs.

Without donors, transplant surgeons cannot save even one life. With just one donor, they can save and improve as many as 50 lives. I believe that we must all pledge to join the national community of organ and tissue sharing by closing the gap between donated organs and tissue and the people who need them.

With this commitment, we pave the way for our nation to be able to answer the hopes and needs of those who now wait too long for a second chance at life.

I urge support of H.R. 457 and challenge all Americans to say "yes" to organ and tissue donation.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

H.R. 1660, PUBLIC SCHOOL
MODERNIZATION ACT OF 1999**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today, along with many of my colleagues, I am introducing legislation, entitled the Public School Modernization Act of 1999, which consists of two education tax incentives that are contained in the President's budget recommendations for fiscal year 2000. I am very pleased that 88 Members have joined me as cosponsors of this needed legislation. I cannot imagine a better way to honor our teachers on "Teacher Appreciation Day" than to work toward modernized schools, smaller classes, and other educational improvements in our public schools.

I will continue to work with the Administration to introduce the President's domestic initiatives that are within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee. I also will continue to urge consideration by the Congress of these important proposals.

The most important challenge facing this country today is the need to improve our educational system. Expanding educational opportunities is crucial to our country's social and economic well being.

I have a personal interest in improving the quality of education for all students. Through the GI bill, this country made an investment in my education that provided me with a needed second chance after the Korean War. I believe that we must give all public school children a second chance so that they can make a positive contribution to society by making the most of their abilities through educational opportunities.

I am very excited that the President emphasize education in his State of the Union address and that his budget recommendations contain a comprehensive program to improve our public school system. The bill that we are introducing today contains two important tax provisions that will help modernize our public schools, reduce class sizes, and expand education-based training opportunities for students most in need.

I recognize that these tax provisions alone are not the total answer to our country's need to improve our educational system. Therefore, I also am a strong supporter of the other education improvements included in the President's budget.

Many children today are attending school in trailers or in dilapidated school buildings. We cannot expect learning to occur in those environments. Other students are forced into huge classes, making it difficult for students to learn and difficult for teachers to help students on an individual basis. Using tax credits, this bill would provide approximately \$24 billion in interest-free funds for school modernization projects. This bill is a meaningful first step in addressing the problem of crowded and dilapidated school facilities.

Recent events have underscored the need for increased school safety measures in many public schools. While these are by no means the only answers, reducing class size and pro-

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viding safe and modern schools will help children get off to the right start and will help teachers more easily recognize and serve those students who may need special attention. In order for our children to learn, they must not be afraid to attend school. Safe schools are a necessity—and a priority. In addition to smaller classes, this legislation will provide the means for school districts to modernize other safety and educational features in the public schools.

We must also do more to provide education and training opportunities for students who do not go on to college. We have existing programs, like the empowerment zone legislation, that provide targeted incentives to encourage economic development in depressed urban and rural areas. While these incentives are important, employers in the targeted areas assert that they are unable to hire qualified individuals to work in the jobs created by the investment programs.

The bill speaks to this problem by extending and enhancing the education zone proposal that was enacted on a limited basis in the 1997 Taxpayer Relief Act. This program is designed to create working partnerships between public and private entities to improve education and training opportunities for students in high poverty rural and urban areas.

Some have argued that the Federal government should have no role in assisting the public school system at the K through 12 level. I disagree strongly. The federal government historically has provided financial resources to the public school system. It has done so in part by providing tax-exempt bond financing that enables State and local governments to fund capital needs through low-interest loans. The bill that we are introducing today, in many respects, is very similar to tax-exempt bond financing. This bill does not require any additional layers of bureaucracy at the Federal or State level. It provides special tax benefits to holders of certain State and local education bonds. The procedures used to determine whether bonds are eligible for those special benefits are substantially the same as the procedures applicable currently in determining whether a State or local bond is eligible for tax-exempt bond financing.

I also want to be very clear that this bill supports our public school system. I believe that improving our public school system should be our highest priority. Approximately 90 percent of the students attending kindergarten through grade 12 attend public schools. If we can find the resources to provide additional tax incentives, those incentives should be focused on improving the public school system that serves such a large segment of our student population. I have and will continue to oppose legislation, such as the so-called "Coverdell" legislation, that diverts scarce resources away from our public school system.

The Republicans are promoting a change in the tax-exempt bond arbitrage rules which they say is a meaningful response to the problem of dilapidated and crowded school buildings. Under current law, a school district issuing construction bonds can invest the bond proceeds temporarily in higher-yielding investments and retain the arbitrage profits if