

Statement on Congressional Action on Appropriations Legislation May 10, 2000

Today both the House and Senate subcommittees passed appropriation bills for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education that fail to invest in the Nation's future and turn back our progress in helping opportunity and prosperity reach all corners of America. During this period of economic prosperity and budget surplus, we should seize the opportunity to improve our Nation's schools, advance the health and well-being of our citizens, and train and protect our workers. Regrettably, misguided priorities and insufficient resources in the bills adopted today have led the Congress in a different direction. Unfortunately, these actions today invest too little in our schools and demand too little from them.

The House bill shortchanges essential initiatives and fails to support our Nation's children and schools. It fails to provide sufficient funding to strengthen accountability and help turn around low-performing schools, reduce class size, increase after-school opportunities, renovate aging and neglected schools, close the digital divide, improve teacher quality, and provide mentoring to help children go to and succeed in college. It hurts unemployed and working Americans by cutting training and other programs that help them find jobs and work in safe environments. The bill fails to make key investments in childcare, preschool, and other important services for poor working families.

The House bill fails to support key health programs by reducing funding for mental health services, family planning services, and substance abuse programs and eliminates funding to improve access to health care for the uninsured. The bill also cut funding needed to ensure nursing home quality and strengthen health benefits administration.

The Senate bill provides more acceptable funding levels for many key programs but does so by bankrupting the Social Services Block Grant, shifting money from children's health insurance, and making other cuts. The bill does not guarantee funding for critical education priorities such as school renovation and reducing class size and underfunds programs to help unemployed workers and youth get job training. The Senate bill also fails to support critical health programs, including funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, mental health and substance abuse services, and nursing home quality oversight.

If a bill that fails to address these concerns were to come to me in its current form, I would have to veto it. I look forward to working with Congress to ensure that this bill strengthens our Nation's schools and supports and enhances other important national priorities while continuing to honor our commitment to fiscal integrity.

Letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein on Signing an Executive Order on Access to HIV/AIDS Pharmaceuticals and Medical Technologies May 10, 2000

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I am pleased to inform you that today I will sign an Executive Order that is intended to help make HIV/AIDS-related drugs and medical technologies more accessible and affordable in beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries. The Executive Order, which is based in large part on your work in connection with the proposed Trade and Development Act of 2000, formalizes U.S. government policy in this area. It also di-

rects other steps to be taken to address the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa, one of the worst health crises the world faces.

As you know, the worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic has taken a terrible toll in terms of human suffering. Nowhere has the suffering been as great as in Africa, where over 5,500 people per day are dying from AIDS. Approximately 34 million people in sub-Saharan Africa