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Statement on the Pathways to College Network

December 6, 2000

I applaud today's announcement of the Pathways to College Network, an important partnership that will complement our GEAR UP and TRIO initiatives by helping to put disadvantaged students on track to a college education. While more and more Americans are enrolling in college, too many disadvantaged students in America still lack the support, resources, motivation, and high expectations that they need to succeed.

In today's information economy, education may be the best investment of a lifetime. Over the past 8 years, we have made the largest investment in higher education since the GI bill by increasing Pell grants and creating the HOPE scholarship, the lifetime learning tax credit, and direct student loans. To help more disadvantaged students get on track for college success, we created the GEAR UP initiative and expanded resources for TRIO.

The Pathways to College Network will build on our effort to expand college opportunities by researching successful programs and using the results to help students across the country. I salute the commitment made by six prominent foundations including the Ford and Gates Foundations, leading non-profit groups dedicated to college opportunity, and Secretary of Education Riley. The network recognizes that elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and communities must work together if we are to successfully address this issue. There is no higher priority than continuing to work to ensure that all Americans have access to a quality education.

Statement on the Need for Congressional Action on Funding for Child Care

December 6, 2000

Today the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is releasing an important report showing that in 1999, States were able to provide child care assistance to only 12 percent of all federally eligible low-income working families. Also today, the Children's Defense Fund is releasing a report showing that the cost of child care is the greatest barrier low-income families face in finding quality care for their children. These new findings demonstrate that too many working families are still struggling with the high cost of child care, and we must ensure America's families have access to affordable, quality child care so they can balance their responsibilities both at work and at home. Under my administration, Federal funding for child care has more than doubled, and the 1996 welfare reform law increased child care funding by $4 billion to provide child care assistance to families moving from welfare to work and to other low-income families, but we can do more.

Two months ago we reached a bipartisan agreement with Congress to provide an $817 million increase for the child care and development block grant program, bringing funding to $2 billion. In 2001 this increase would enable the program to provide child care subsidies for nearly 200,000 more children. With these new resources, combined with the child care funds provided as part of welfare reform, the program could serve more than 2.1 million children in 2001, an increase of nearly one million since 1997. We are still meeting only a fraction of the need, but this is a critical step forward. I urge Congress to complete the work it has left undone for more than 2 months and heed the message of these reports by increasing funding for affordable, quality child care. America's working families should not have to wait any longer.