

## Castle Examines Improvement of Head Start Programs at Congressional Hearing as Reauthorization Is Set To Begin -- February 28, 2007

Washington D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, today participated in a Congressional hearing regarding the improvement of Head Start for America's children, as the House Education and Labor Committee is set to begin the reauthorization of the Head Start program in the coming months.

During the hearing, Castle asked the witnesses about the integration of Head Start with other school readiness programs to ensure that all children are receiving the same quality services. Along with Head Start, various local initiatives have been launched for early childhood education, and today, disadvantaged children and families have access to programs and services from a wide range of sources. In response, the witnesses praised most collaborative efforts currently underway at the state level.

"The importance of early childhood education and services cannot be overstated and to this end, Head Start continues to serve as an effective and popular program, providing children with a solid foundation that will prepare them for success in school and later in life. In fact, over time, this program has provided this valuable service to nearly 20 million low-income children and their families throughout the United States. Currently, Delaware Head Start programs serve over 1,500 children, with almost 500 additional four year olds receiving assistance through state government funding. I look forward to beginning Head Start's reauthorization so that we can build upon past success in the program to ensure that we're providing the best for America's children," Castle said at the hearing.

In his opening statement, Congressman Castle outlined some of the following goals for the reauthorization of Head Start:

- Retain focus on allowing economically disadvantaged children to have access to the same educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services that are enjoyed by their more affluent peers.
- Close the school readiness gap -- Head Start students continue to enter kindergarten well below national norms in school readiness.
- Address past incidents of fiscal mismanagement to ensure that designated funding for Head Start is not being diverted away from the program.

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