

Castle: Reauthorization Will Improve Already Successful Head Start Program -- November 14, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a Senior Republican of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, today praised the House for the bipartisan passage of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act. Rep. Castle, an original co-sponsor of H.R. 1429 and author of the Head Start Reauthorization bills of the 108th and 109th Congress, cast a vote in support of this legislation to strengthen and improve the Head Start Program. Specifically, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act addresses Head Start teacher and classroom quality, coordination between Head Start and state and local early childhood programs, and Head Start's financial accountability. Rep. Castle believes this legislation is critical, as it will improve Head Start by emphasizing that every child, regardless of his or her economic status, should have the best chance possible to succeed.

"The passage of this Head Start Conference Report today emphasizes the importance of early childhood education and services throughout the United States. We can all agree on the need for Head Start and acknowledge that Head Start is a program that lives up to its name by giving disadvantaged children across the nation the 'head start' they need to enter kindergarten, as well as prepare them for success in school and life," Castle said.

In Delaware alone, Head Start programs serve over 2,000 children, with over 800 additional three and four year olds receiving assistance through state government funding.

"The updated teacher quality provision of the Conference Report requires that 50% of teachers in center-based programs nationwide have a BA by 2013. The Conference Report also requires that all Early Head Start teachers have a child development associate credential by 2010.

"I am also pleased that this report addresses the unfortunate financial mismanagement of some federal Head Start funds. We have a responsibility to make certain that Head Start children get the most out of every tax dollar and along with the expertise of the Government Accountability Office and through reforms made in this bill, changes will be made to avoid these issues in the future.

"It is critical that we provide every child with the opportunity to succeed, and by reauthorizing Head Start, we are ensuring those efforts. The goal of the program was, as it remains today, to provide children a solid foundation that will prepare them for success in school and later in life. I am hopeful that the President will sign the Head Start reauthorization into law shortly," Castle said.

Head

Start was created in 1965 to give economically disadvantaged children access to the same educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services that were enjoyed by their more affluent peers. As the centerpiece of the Federal government's efforts to support quality early childhood education for our nation's most disadvantaged youth, Head Start has served over 24 million low-income children and their families.

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