

Rep. Castle Highlights Head Start Early Childhood Program at Enrollment Ceremony -- December 5, 2007

Washington,
DC

-- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Senior Republican of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, took the opportunity today to highlight the success of the Head Start Early Childhood Development and Education Program, a program providing low-income children access to educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services.

At the enrollment ceremony, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) signed the recently passed, bipartisan Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, which aims to improve and reauthorize the Head Start program. Congressman Castle, an author of the legislation, talked at the ceremony about key aspects of the bill and discussed his recent visits to Head Start centers throughout Delaware.

"Head Start is a program which lives up to its name and gives disadvantaged children the 'head start' they need to enroll in school and succeed," said Rep. Castle. "With the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, we are building upon the success of the Head Start program by increasing the focus on academic development, reinforcing program integrity, and improving the coordination between Head Start and state and local early childhood programs.

"I was able to witness the success of the Head Start program first-hand at my recent visits to Head Start Centers throughout Delaware, including the Bear Head Start Center in New Castle County, the Colonial Gardens Head Start Center in Kent County, and the Stockley Center's Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Sussex County.

"I am pleased with the passage of this legislation, which bolsters Head Start and allows it to better serve over 900,000 children, parents, and neighborhoods, such as those I visited in Delaware, as well as those around the nation.

The legislation will now be sent to President Bush for his signature. Specifically, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act will:

Strengthen Head Start's Academic Components by:

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Emphasizing "what works" in preparing disadvantaged children for school;
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Improving Head Start teacher quality;
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Strengthening academic quality standards;
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Ensuring that early childhood education programs are based on scientifically-valid research; and
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Requiring no new testing.

Improving Fiscal and Program Management by:

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Creating more competition in the Head Start system;
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Seeking better safeguards against financial abuse;
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Limiting excessive salaries and perks, as proposed by Republicans during a motion to instruct negotiators on the final legislation; and
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Improving program disclosure and transparency. "

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