

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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**Chairman Miller Floor Statement on Head Start  
Reauthorization Conference Report**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for floor consideration of the Head Start Reauthorization Conference Report*

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Madam/Mr. Speaker:

More than 40 years ago, we recognized that poverty was robbing millions of children of the opportunity to do well in school and succeed in life.

As a nation, we made a decision to help poor children reach school age ready to succeed by creating the Head Start early childhood program.

In the last four decades, it has helped nearly 25 million children by providing them with high-quality, comprehensive education, health, and nutrition services.

Head Start remains a cornerstone in this country's efforts to help all children learn, to combat poverty, and to provide all Americans with the opportunity to meet their fullest potential.

We know that Head Start works. Research shows that not only do Head Start students make important educational gains while they attend the program, they also continue to gain ground after they leave Head Start.

Research shows that by the end of kindergarten, Head Start graduates are “essentially at national norms in early reading and writing” and have further narrowed the achievement gap in vocabulary, general knowledge and early math.

In other words, Head Start is doing what we expect and demand that it should do – help prepare children to succeed in school and in life.

We also know that there are ways we can improve Head Start.

That is why I am so pleased to be here today with a bipartisan conference report to reauthorize and reinvigorate Head Start.

This bipartisan legislation improves teacher and classroom quality, expands access to Head Start for more children, improves comprehensive services that help children and their families, and ensures that taxpayer dollars only fund Head Start centers that are well-run and high quality.

First, this legislation builds on Head Start's success by integrating the best available science on child development to inform classroom instruction.

Each year we learn more and more about how children's brains develop. This legislation ensures that we improve teacher quality and update classroom practices based on what the research tells us.

It requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to re-evaluate and update early learning standards and use of assessments with the best available science, including a forthcoming study from the National Academy of Sciences.

And it terminates further use of an inappropriate and ineffective testing regime for 4-year-olds. This wasteful testing regime cost taxpayers over \$25 million dollars, it took up valuable classroom time and hasn't been useful for improving program quality.

Of course, Head Start is much more than an educational program. Head Start provides health, nutrition and parent education services in addition to a strong educational curriculum.

The conference report recognizes this by also strengthening Head Start's role in meeting these important needs of the children it serves.

This legislation takes important steps to ensure that Head Start centers are well-run and effectively managed. This will ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely and that every Head Start center is high quality.

The report allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to more quickly take funding away from bad programs. It requires that new and detailed fiscal management protocols be included in program reviews.

Finally, the legislation also expands access to Head Start in many important ways.

Expansion of Early Head Start is prioritized so more infants and toddlers can attend Head Start during the years their brains are growing the fastest.

And expansion of Migrant and Indian programs is prioritized so more of these children can have access to this important program.

Madam/Mr. Speaker, before I close, I'd like to take a minute to thank Congressman McKeon, Chairman Kildee, Congressman Castle, Chairman Kennedy, Senator Enzi, Senator Dodd, and Senator Alexander for their hard work in getting us to this point.

I'd also like to thank the staff for their work and expertise.

In particular, I'd like to thank, Liz King and Jean Harmann with Legislative Counsel, Lloyd Horwich with Mr. Kildee, James Bergeron, Susan Ross, Kirsten Duncan, and Jessica Gross with Mr. McKeon and Mr. Castle, Roberto Rodriguez and David Johns with Senator Kennedy, Catherine Hildum with Senator Dodd, Lindsay Hunsicker and Beth Buehlmann with Senator Enzi, Avid Cleary and Sara Rittling with Senator Alexander. And from my own staff – Lamont Ivey, Molly Carter, Kate Scully, Stephanie Moore, and Ruth Friedman

This bill will build on Head Start's past successes to create an even stronger program to provide Head Start children with a better future.

I am pleased that we are about to send this legislation to the President for his signature.

I thank my colleagues for their efforts.

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