



Federal Update – May 29, 2007

This update covers:

- Legislation
- Committee Briefing
- SCHIP Update
- Campaigns and Pre-K Polling Data
- State Breakouts: May 22nd Speaker's Summit

Questions?
Contact: Matt Smith
Federal Policy Fellow
msmith@preknow.org

Legislation

Sens. Brown and Voinovich Offer Bill to Strengthen State Early Childhood Education Systems

Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and George Voinovich (R-OH) offered a bill ([S. 1431](#)) on May 17 to provide funding for comprehensive state-wide professional development and career systems. The bill authorizes federal grants to help states create career networks for early childhood educators. These networks will assist state-level efforts to boost enrollment in professional training programs and improve teacher compensation. Funding is also provided to facilitate the preparation and recruitment of early childhood educators in colleges and universities.

Sens. Feinstein and Voinovich, Rep. DeLauro Introduce Bill to Make *Head Start* Teachers Eligible for Student Debt Relief

Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and George Voinovich (R-OH) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) introduced legislation to make *Head Start* teachers eligible for student loan forgiveness under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The legislation ([H.R. 1779](#)) enables *Head Start* teachers who teach for five consecutive years in a *Head Start* program to receive up to \$5,000 in relief for their student loans.

Committee Briefing

Committee Hearing on Children's Outdoor Recreation

The House [Committee on Natural Resources](#) held a hearing on May 24th to evaluate proposals to encourage outdoor recreation for children. The hearing, entitled "No Child Left Inside," featured

Kenneth Ginsburg of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Amy Pertschuk of the Children and Nature Network, among others. National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and Ranking Member Rob Bishop (R-UT) presided.

Committee Report on Pre-K for All

The [Joint Economic Committee](#) of the House and Senate, chaired by Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) released a report on pre-k, “The Economic Benefits of Investing in High-Quality Preschool Education.” The report concluded that “investing in high-quality preschool is a cost-effective method for improving the life circumstances of children.... The economy as a whole will benefit from resulting increases in productivity and growth.” The Committee does not approve legislation and so cannot set policy; however, it can make recommendations and influence the debate on Capitol Hill.

SCHIP Update

Congress is due to consider extending the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) during this two-year session of Congress. Here is a brief overview of the main proposals to improve the federal-state health insurance program for low-income children:

- [Kids Come First Act of 2007](#) (Sen. John Kerry, D-MA; Rep. Henry Waxman, D-CA) - The Kerry-Waxman proposal would substantially increase federal assistance to states that agree to expand eligibility for children under SCHIP. The bill would enable states to receive 100% Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentages to match state expenditures for medical assistance for children in poverty in exchange for expanding coverage of children in working poor families under Medicaid. The bill also eliminates the cap on SCHIP funding that states can receive to expand eligibility for children. Under current law, SCHIP funding for states is limited to 145% of their allotment in FY 1999. Both the House and Senate versions of the bill are awaiting consideration by respective committees.
- [Healthy Kids Act of 2007](#) (Rep. Rahm Emanuel, D-IL; Sen. Richard Durbin, D-IL) - The Emanuel-Durbin proposal extends funding for SCHIP by creating a new formula that accounts for child population growth and rising health care costs. The bill also attempts to expedite the approval process for qualifying children of low-income families for SCHIP assistance through “Express Lane” provisions, an issue that the Democratic leadership campaigned on in the midterm election. Elementary schools and *Head Start* programs are designated to receive federal grants to conduct SCHIP outreach and enrollment initiatives. The bill also creates a tax credit for families living close to poverty who purchase children’s health insurance from individual health plans.
- [Children’s Health First Act](#) (Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-NY; Rep. John Dingell, D-MI) - The Clinton-Dingell bill eases limitations on eligibility for SCHIP by allowing states to provide SCHIP services to children living at or below four times the federal poverty threshold. Federal Medical Assistance Percentages are increased in the bill, and in order to receive the higher

matching amounts states must implement administrative reforms such as 12-month eligibility for children and conduct of outreach and enrollment programs in public elementary and secondary schools. Additionally, the Clinton-Dingell bill would automatically adjust federal allotments to correspond with increases in the overall cost of healthcare. “Express Lane” eligibility verification that resembles provisions in the Emanuel-Durbin bill also appears in the Clinton-Dingell proposal.

Campaigns and Pre-K Polling Data

Clinton Campaign Announces \$5 Billion Proposal to Provide Pre-K for All

Speaking on May 21st at the North Beach Elementary School in Miami-Dade County, Florida, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) announced a plan to direct \$5 billion in federal funds to states to establish and administer pre-kindergarten for all four year olds. The Clinton plan calls on states to provide matching funds for awarded grants, which will increase to \$10 billion in total as states develop their programs.

Sen. Clinton’s proposal includes quality benchmarks that reflect Pre-K Now’s criteria for high-quality programs. To be eligible for funding, states would need to:

- ensure that all classroom teachers have a bachelor’s degree with specialized training in early education;
- implement an aligned system of developmentally appropriate early learning standards, curricula, and assessments; and
- maintain low child/teacher ratios.

Once these guidelines are met, states can apply remaining funds to accomplish broader objectives, such as involving younger children, raising teachers’ pay, and providing wrap-around services to meet the needs of working parents.

PNC Financial Services Poll Finds Broad Support for Pre-K in Congress

A [poll](#) of congressional leaders and the general public sponsored by PNC Financial Services this month found sweeping support for pre-k in the U.S. Congress. The poll found that 78 percent of Congressional respondents consider it important for children to attend pre-k. The response from Congress largely mirrored the finding that 73 percent of the general public considers pre-k important. Congressional respondents divided on the issue of federal support for pre-k, with more than half of Congressional Democratic leaders supporting a federal role, joined by 17 percent of the Republican leadership.

State Breakouts

We would like to recognize the following legislators who attended Speaker Nancy Pelosi's National Summit on America's Children on May 22nd.

California

Rep. Lois Capps (CA-23)
Rep. Susan Davis (CA-53)
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (CA-14)
Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15)
Rep. Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)
Rep. Hilda L. Solis (CA-32)
Rep. Pete Stark (CA-13)

Connecticut

Rep. Joe Courtney (CT-2)
Rep. John B. Larson (CT-1)

Florida

Rep. Tim Mahoney (FL-16)

Georgia

Rep. John Lewis (GA-5)

Hawaii

Rep. Mazie Hirono (HI-2)

Illinois

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (IL-9)

Iowa

Rep. David Loebsack (IA-2)

Kentucky

Rep. John A. Yarmuth (KY-3)

Maryland

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (MA-8)

Massachusetts

Rep. Barney Frank (MA-4)

Michigan

Rep. Dale Kildee (MI-5)
Rep. Sander Levin (MI-12)

New York

Rep. Tim Bishop (NY-1)

Rep. Nita Lowey (NY-18)

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (NY-14)

Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (NY-4)

New Jersey

Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12)

North Carolina

Rep. Bob Etheridge (NC-2)

Ohio

Rep. Tim Ryan (OH-17)

Pennsylvania

Rep. Allyson Y. Schwartz (PA-13)

Rep. Joe Sestak (PA-7)

Rhode Island

Rep. Patrick Kennedy (RI-1)

Texas

Rep. Lloyd Doggett (TX-25)

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18)

Washington

Rep. Jim McDermott (WA-7)

U.S. Virgin Islands

Del. Donna M. Christian-Christensen