



## Federal Update – June 26, 2007

This update covers:

- *Head Start* Reauthorization Includes Bachelor's Degree Standards, Coordinating Councils
- Pre-K Teachers Supported in Higher Education Act
- JEC Hearing Promotes the Economics of Pre-K
- Labor-HHS-Education Budget Receives Veto Threat

Questions?  
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### Committee Report

#### Senate *Head Start* Reauthorization Includes Bachelor's Degree Standards and State Advisory/Early Learning Councils

Last week, the Senate passed its bill to reauthorize *Head Start*, the Head Start for School Readiness Act, introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA). The proposal passed as reported by the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and will move to conference. Pre-K Now recommends that the stronger elements of both versions be adopted into the final bill, including robust financing for early learning councils and bachelor's degree certification standards for *Head Start* teachers. For more information on the *Head Start* reauthorization, please see our [information sheet](#) for Hill staff.

#### Pre-K Teachers and Professional Development Programs for Early Childhood Educators Strengthened in Higher Education Act Reauthorization

The Senate HELP Committee has reported its bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act with allowable grants for programs that train early childhood educators and tuition relief for pre-k and *Head Start* teachers. The House has approved a separate "reconciliation" measure on higher education including more limited loan relief provisions but has not yet considered a reauthorization. The measure includes a proposal by Rep. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) to provide up to \$5,000 in student loan forgiveness to early childhood educators who teach in low-income communities for at least five consecutive years. The congresswoman also introduced the measure as a separate bill.

The Senate reauthorization substantially enhances the presence of early childhood education in federal programs to support teacher training. Pre-K Now will continue to advocate expanding training and loan relief provisions for pre-k and *Head Start* teachers as the House and Senate

authorizing committees report their measures for a final vote on the floor. For more, [read Pre-K Now's letter](#) to the Senate HELP Committee on the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

### **Joint Economic Committee Holds Hearing on Economic Benefits of Pre-K**

On Wednesday, the Joint Economic Committee of the House and Senate gave pre-k advocates an important platform to articulate the economic benefits of pre-k. The hearing, entitled “Investing in Young Children Pays Dividends: The Economic Case for Early Care and Education,” was chaired by Rep. Maloney and Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA). Expert testimony was provided by James Heckman of the University of Chicago, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas, Harriet Dichter of the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, and Douglas Besharov of the American Enterprise Institute.

Committee members who attended in addition to Casey and Maloney were Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) and Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Sens. Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

The hearing demonstrated the increasing support for federal involvement in pre-k on the Hill. Rep. Maloney recently introduced a House version ([H.R. 2859](#)) of the pre-k bill introduced by Sen. Casey, which would authorize \$5 billion in federal funds to reduce the cost and improve the services of pre-k programs targeted to children living below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Members of the Committee voiced strong agreement with the panelists' observations that the high returns on early intervention more than justify the costs of investing in pre-k. For more information, please visit the [JEC website](#).

## **Appropriations**

### **FY08 Education Budget Receives Veto Threat**

The Labor/HHS appropriations subcommittees of the House and Senate have passed their respective budgets for the coming fiscal year. Both include modest increases for the Department of Education, No Child Left Behind programs, and *Head Start*, which received a needed funding increase although the total amount fell short of the National Head Start Association's requested level. The Senate subcommittee's appropriations bill is at the center of a dispute between Congress and the White House over provisions inserted by Subcommittee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Ranking Member Arlen Specter (R-PA) to increase funding for stem cell research. The president has threatened to veto the bill unless the stem cell provisions are withdrawn despite strong bipartisan support in the Senate.