



Legislative Update from Washington, D.C.:

The 110th Congress has made a major push and focus on early childhood issues. The following briefing is a review of the major pieces of legislation that have been introduced and are in place for action in the Nation's Capitol. There is also a longer list of child welfare and related legislation that has been introduced following this section; that list was compiled by the Kids Count Initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

This year we have seen a major push to advance early childhood issues in Washington. From the Speaker's National Summit on Children, to the reauthorization and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the bills recently introduced by Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Bob Casey (D-PA), Kit Bond (R-MO), Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Representative Danny Davis (D-IL). In addition, legislation addressing the reauthorization of Head Start and the Higher Education Act includes provisions to strengthen early childhood education. Congress made a concerted – and successful – effort to pass SCHIP bills in each chamber before adjourning for the August recess. All other early childhood legislation, however, will be addressed in the remaining months of the first session.

HEADSTART

The *Head Start for School Readiness Act* (H.R.1429, S. 556), which reauthorizes the Head Start program, was passed in the House on May 2 and in the Senate by unanimous consent on June 19. Differences are currently being resolved between the two versions in conference and a final vote is hoped for in September.

The Senate bill is very similar to the version approved by the Senate HELP Committee in February. It increases income eligibility for families and requires less successful programs to reapply for their grants. Both bills increase the set-aside for Early Head Start program funding from 10% to 20% over the next five years. The Secretary of Health and Human Services will be authorized to provide Early Head Start programs with additional funding. Both bills allow Head Start programs to use federal funding on infants and toddlers if needed.

STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

The House and Senate passed legislation to reauthorize and expand SCHIP in the final days before Congress recessed. After a week of heated debate and Republican resistance, the House passed a bill to add \$50 billion to the program by a vote of 225 to 204. The *Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007* (CHAMP) will expand coverage

to an additional 5 million children and is financed by a \$.45 federal tobacco tax and cuts to Medicare Advantage.

The Senate passed the *Small Business Tax Relief Act of 2007* (H.R. 976) on August 2, with the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007* (S. 1893), attached as an amendment. The bill features a \$35 billion program increase to enroll an additional 3 million children. It will offset the cost of the program with a \$.61 increase in the federal cigarette tax.

The differences between the two versions of the bill will be addressed in conference in September. President Bush has threatened to veto both versions of the bill.

PREPARE ALL KIDS ACT

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA) introduced the *Prepare All Kids Act of 2007* on May 11. The bill, S. 1374, will assist states in making high quality full-day pre kindergarten programs available and affordable to all children for at least one year. States will be awarded matching grants and the flexibility to set their own curricula in exchange for agreeing to target the most disadvantaged and at-risk children from families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty line. Cosponsors of the legislation are Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The bill was referred to the Senate HELP Committee. The federal government will assume 50 percent of the cost, to be matched by the state. The bill will authorize \$5,000,000,000 in federal funding for fiscal year 2008, increasing by \$1,000,000,000 each year thereafter until 2012.

Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) introduced a counterpart bill in the House on June 26. H.R. 2859 is co-sponsored by Representatives Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Steve Cohen (D-TN), and Allyson Schwartz (D-PA). The bill was referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

READY TO LEARN ACT

On July 19, Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Christopher Bond (R-MO) introduced S. 1823, the *Ready to Learn Act*. The legislation aims to prepare children for kindergarten by distributing competitive grants to states to establish or strengthen pre-existing voluntary preschool programs for children age 4. The Secretary will be authorized to appropriate "such sums as may be necessary" for each of the fiscal years 2007 through 2012. The Federal share will be 50 percent. Senator Clinton said recently that she hopes her bill, which was referred to the Senate HELP Committee, will become part of the HELP Committee's NCLB reauthorization bill.

EDUCATION BEGINS AT HOME ACT

Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) and Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO) have introduced bills in the House and Senate to enhance early education home visitation

programs. The *Education Begins at Home Act* (H.R. 2343, S. 667) aims to promote early childhood home visitations; improve Early Head Start programs; more effectively reach families with English language learners and families serving in the military; and to establish a public education and awareness campaign concerning the importance of the proper care of infants and young children. H.R. 2343 was introduced on May 16 and currently has 32 bi-partisan cosponsors. The bill was referred to the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities as well as the Armed Services Committee. Representative Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI) is the only member of the Michigan delegation to be a cosponsor. The Senate bill, S. 667 has 22 bi-partisan cosponsors and was introduced on February 16. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) is a cosponsor of the bill which was referred to the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Both bills authorize \$400,000,000 for FY 2008 through 2010, but only the Senate version limits the amount States may receive to a maximum of \$20,000,000.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT ACT

Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-3rd CT) and Joe Courtney (D-2nd CT) introduced *The Early Childhood Investment Act of 2007* (S. 1573 / H.R. 2616) on June 7. The bill aims to encourage public-private partnerships between states and local community initiatives and programs that serve young children from birth to five years by awarding competitive grants. Partners will be allowed to leverage funding from non-profit and for-profit organizations, private entities, and state government in order to improve access to high-quality early childhood programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, childcare, preschool, and home visiting programs. The legislation authorizes \$8,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2008, \$10,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2009, and “such sums as may be necessary” for each of the fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012.

The bill was referred to the Education and Labor Committee.

NEWBORN SCREENING SAVES ACT

On July 23, Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) introduced the *Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act of 2007* (S. 1858) to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish grant programs to provide for education and outreach on newborn screening and coordinate follow-up care once newborn screening has been conducted. The bill authorizes approximately \$65.5 million to carry out a number of screening initiatives in 2008. The HELP Committee plans to address the bill after the August recess.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is highly anticipated in the education community. A number of bills addressing the upcoming reauthorization have been introduced in the last month or so. Senators Richard Burr (R-NC) and Judd Gregg (R-NH) introduced the first comprehensive reauthorization bill on June 12 which reflects

the views of the Education Department, The Education Trust, Council of the Great City Schools, Hispanic Education Coalition, the Business Coalition for Student Achievement and Commission on No Child Left Behind.

On July 30, House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) delivered a speech on the reauthorization timetable, saying that he plans to introduce and pass a reauthorization bill out of Committee and bring it up on the House floor in September. Despite the aggressive timetable the Chairman set forth, the reauthorization promises to pose a number of obstacles, and many people are skeptical of the rapidly approaching deadline.

As a member of the Senate HELP Committee, Senator Clinton has emphasized her intention of putting early childhood and pre-kindergarten language into the NCLB reauthorization bill. In his bid for the presidency, Senator Dodd has also announced a comprehensive school plan, which among other things, includes reforms to NCLB and universal pre-school.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

The Senate passed the Higher Education Amendments of 2007 (S. 1642) by unanimous consent on June 24. The passage marks the end of a seven year long reauthorization process of the Higher Education Act and makes numerous changes to federal higher education programs. The House has yet to draft its version of the reauthorization bill and will address it after the August recess.

The legislation includes a number of small provisions related to child well-being. Eligibility for immigrant and seasonal farm work programs is expanded to include any child who has immediate family members who have spent a minimum of 75 days over the last two years in migrant and seasonal farm work. The program is expanded to include transportation and child care. A provision is amended to provide child welfare workers, Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, and full time staff members of licensed pre-kindergarten and child care programs, with Perkins loan forgiveness. A new competitive grant program is authorized to establish and support new State Early Childhood Education Professional Development and Career System Task Forces.

This report was compiled for ECIC by Washington Partners LLC

Child Welfare and Related Legislation in the 110th Congress

Current as of 6/27/07

National Center for Social Work Research Act (S. 106): Amends the Public Health Service Act to establish a National Center for Social Work Research to conduct, support and distribute targeted research on social work methods and outcomes in areas including families of children experiencing abuse and neglect and youth violence. (Sponsor: Inouye). *Referred to:* Senate HELP.

Foster Care Mentoring Act of 2007 (S. 379): Authorizes state grants to support public and private entities to establish and expand mentoring programs for children in foster care. The bill also authorizes funding for a national hotline to provide information to individuals interested in mentoring. (Sponsor: Landrieu). *Referred to:* Senate Finance.

Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Act Amendments of 2007 (S. 398): Amends the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act to identify and remove barriers to reducing child abuse among Indian children. (Sponsors: Dorgan, McCain). *Referred to:* Senate Committee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security.

Adoption Tax Relief Guarantee Act (S. 561/ H.R. 471): makes permanent the adoption tax credit increase from \$5,000 to \$10,000 as required by the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001 for families with an adjusted gross income of less than \$150,000 a year. (Sponsors: Senate: Bunning, Nelson/ House: Wilson, Snyder). *Referred to:* House Ways and Means/ Senate Finance.

Safe Babies Act of 2007 (S. 627/ H.R. 1082): Establishes a National Court Teams Resource Center to provide juvenile courts with grants for local court teams to better handle infant and toddler abuse and neglect cases. (Sponsors: Senate: Harkin, Smith/ House: R. DeLauro, Ros-Lehtinen). *Referred to:* Senate Judiciary/ House Ed. And Labor.

Kinship Care Support Act (S.661/ H.R. 2188): Supports grandparents and other relative caregivers by: (1) establishing grants for state kinship navigator programs to link kinship care families with needed services and supports; (2) authorizing federal assistance for states to establish and expand a Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (also known as “subsidized guardianship”) for eligible children who exit foster care under the guardianship of qualified relatives; (3) requiring that states provide timely notice to relatives when children go into foster care; and (4) allowing states to have separate foster care licensing standards for related and non-related foster parents. (Sponsors: Senate: Clinton, Snowe/ House: D. Davis, T. Johnson). *Referred to:* Senate Finance/ House Ways and Means and Ed. And Labor.

Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2007 (S. 844): Provides protection and standards of care for children with no legal immigrant status and no parent or legal guardian to care for them in the United States. The bill establishes a Guardian Ad Litem program for all unaccompanied alien children. (Sponsors: Feinstein, Hagel). *Referred to:* Senate Judiciary.

Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Act of 2007 (S. 1204/ H.R. 2052): Authorizes a National Action Plan to organize public awareness and education efforts around the dangers and risks of Shaken Baby Syndrome, including family support programs such as home visiting. (Sponsors: Senate: Dodd, Cochran/ House: N. Lowery, Doolittle). *Referred to:* Senate HELP/ House Energy and Commerce.

Adoption Equality Act of 2007 (S. 1462): Changes the federal adoption assistance program eligibility requirements by no longer requiring that children must be eligible for federal public assistance in the home from which they were removed. (Sponsor: Rockefeller). *Referred to:* Senate Finance.

State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2007 (S. 1482/ H.R. 2477): Requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct research on additional indicators of child well-being, including additional educational measures, family well-being, physical and mental health and safety, and family relationships. (Sponsors: Senate: Rockefeller, Snowe/ House: C. Fattah, Camp). *Referred to:* House Ways and Means/ Senate Finance.

Fostering Adoption to Further Student Achievement Act (S. 1488): Amends the definition of an “independent student” (used to determine eligibility for college financial aid) in the Higher Education Act to include youth adopted after the age of 13. (Sponsor: Coleman). *Referred to:* Senate HELP.

Foster Care Continuing Opportunities Act (S. 1512): Expands federal eligibility for children in foster care who are 18 and decide to remain in foster care through the age of 21, included expanded federal funding to provide these young people with essential services, such as food and housing. (Sponsor: Boxer). *Referred to:* Senate Finance.

Baby Abandonment Prevention Act of 2007 (H.R. 259): Directs the Attorney General to establish a Department of Justice (Bureau of Justice Statistics) Task Force to gather information about, study, and report to Congress on the abandonment of infant children. (Sponsor: S. Jackson-Lee). *Referred to:* House Judiciary (Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security) and House Ed. And Labor (Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities).

Foster Children Self-Support Act (H.R. 1104): Bans the state’ use of foster youth’s Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments as reimbursement for foster care maintenance payments. (Sponsors: P. Stark, Cardoza). *Referred to:* House Ways and Means.

Amend Title IV-E Training (H.R. 2314): Increases payments to states for training of private child welfare agency staff through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, the main source of federal foster care funding to the states. (Sponsor: J. Weller). *Referred to:* House Ways and Means.

Related Legislation

Keeping Families Together Act of 2007 (S. 382/ H.R. 687): Provides grants to allow states to establish a family support program so parents will no longer have to relinquish the custody of their children with serious emotional disturbances to state agencies for the sole purpose of obtaining appropriate mental health services. (Sponsors: Senate: Collins, Harkin/ House: J. Ramstad, Stark). *Referred to:* Senate HELP/ House Energy and Commerce, Health Subcommittee.

Education Begins at Home Act (S. 667/ H.R. 2343): Authorizes competitive state grants for the delivery of early childhood home visitation services to pregnant women and parents of children from birth until kindergarten. (Sponsors: Senate: Bond, Bayh/ House: D. Davis, Platts). *Referred to:* Senate HELP/ House Ed. And Labor and House Armed Services.

Family-Based Meth Treatment Access Act of 2007 (S. 884/ H.R. 405): Authorizes the expansion and coordination of programs to provide comprehensive, family-based substance abuse treatment for pregnant and parenting women, with special priority for communities experiencing high rates of addiction to methamphetamine and other drugs. (Sponsors: Senate: Durbin, Coleman/ House: Cubin, Hooley). *Referred to:* House Energy and Commerce, Health Subcommittee/ Senate HELP.

Healthy Children and Families Act (S. 1052): Gives state the option to provide nurse home visitation services under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. (Sponsor: Salazar, Specter). *Referred to:* Senate Finance.

Information obtained from KIDS COUNT of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information please visit www.kidscount.org.