

"The truth has never hurt a democracy. Since there are so many unanswered questions, an investigation will not hurt. It will once and for all end the questions of Americans and of many people around the world."

From Strongsville, Ohio, Sandy Fronius, a constituent of mine in northeast Ohio, writes:

"I am just a typical middle-aged, middle-class American, and I am deeply concerned about the possibility that the young men and women of our Armed Forces were sent into danger for no good reason. If we were lied to, I believe Mr. Bush should be relieved of his office."

Jerry Lowe from Cincinnati:

"If you as my Congressman have nothing to hide, if the Republican Party has nothing to hide, if the Bush administration has nothing to hide, then I urge you to join the crusade for truth to which all public servants should subscribe. Your constituents are watching. Restore the faith of Ohioans and Americans in the dedication of our elected officials to seek the truth and serve our country with integrity."

There are literally hundreds of more of these in Ohio, thousands, tens of thousands more of these around the country. I think people are very concerned and want to see Congress pay attention to what really happened.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEAD START REAUTHORIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, this week we will consider legislation that is of critical importance to our Nation's future, the reauthorization of Head Start. This legislation is a top priority for me and for all of my colleagues in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Asian-Pacific American Caucus. Today, Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States. However, the Hispanic community has the lowest level of educational attainment of any community in the Nation. This educational attainment, this attainment gap, starts from early childhood where Hispanics are less likely to participate in preschool programs, opening an achievement gap even before the first day of kindergarten begins. The gap expands through elementary school, where Hispanic students are more likely to be held back; increases in high school where they are more likely to drop out; and continues to widen in

college where they are less likely to attend a 4-year college and less likely to obtain a college degree.

The upcoming reauthorization of the premier early childhood education program, Head Start, presents us with an opportunity to close that gap for Hispanic and low-income children. This should be a time of hope and optimism for our community. Sadly, it is just the opposite. The majority's plans for the Head Start program are a great source of anxiety for the Hispanic community.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a recent article dated July 14, 2003, from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram entitled, "Hispanics Worry About Head Start Proposal."

For over 35 years, the Head Start program has enjoyed great success in meeting the comprehensive development needs of low-income children. Head Start programs achieve school readiness for these children through a holistic approach and intense parental involvement. The range and intensity of services is assured because of national program standards. Sending the program to the States would fatally undermine these national standards, jeopardizing access to the comprehensive services that make Head Start effective in serving low-income children and their families.

Yet that is just what the administration proposed and the Republicans in Congress intend to do. The Republican proposal to block-grant Head Start will do nothing to strengthen the program for the growing numbers of limited English proficient, LEP, children in communities across the Nation. As we have seen with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, States look to the Federal Government for assistance and guidance in providing services to these populations. When Federal assistance is not forthcoming, the children suffer. Instead of looking for ways to divest themselves of responsibility for Head Start, the administration and the Congress should put Head Start on a path to full funding. Currently Head Start only serves 60 percent of the eligible population in our country. Migrant and seasonal Head Start programs only reach 19 percent of the eligible children; and, listen to this, Early Head Start only reaches 3 percent of the eligible children.

As a Nation, we must do better. Every child in America, no matter their race or the income level of their parents, should have the same opportunity to obtain a quality education and reach their full potential. We have the opportunity to do this, reach their full potential, in the Head Start reauthorization bill. Unfortunately, however, the legislation we will debate this week falls far short of that mark.

In closing, I want to say that I hope my colleagues will defeat H.R. 2210 and send the bill back to the committee for more work. We can do better. And for the sake of needy children all across the country, we must do better.

[From the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 14, 2003]

HISPANICS WORRY ABOUT HEAD START PROPOSAL

(By Gustavo Reveles Acosta)

FORT WORTH.—The already low number of Hispanic children served by the federal Head Start program could diminish even more if the changes proposed by the Bush administration come through, several Hispanic advocate groups said.

Hispanic advocates are calling President Bush's call to overhaul Head Start by creating eight state-operated programs "a blow" to providing service to low-income Hispanic children.

"Ours are some of the most vulnerable kids. Head Start gives them an opportunity to be introduced to English, books and ongoing health care," said Manda Lopez, executive director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association, which advocates for the children of migrant farmworkers, who are mostly Hispanics.

Lopez, and groups such as the National Council of La Raza and the National Head Start Association, argue that handing over the 38-year-old program to the states will reduce funding for local grantees, diminish the quality of services and erase most of the tough oversight that is enforced under the federal program.

The reduced funding will further underserve the Hispanic population, Hispanic groups contend.

The National Council of La Raza, which will consider the Head Start issue during its national conference in Austin next week, believes that Hispanic children in areas with traditionally strong Hispanic populations are better served. But it is in communities with emerging populations of Hispanics that the most help is needed.

"States like California and Texas do much better than states like South Carolina that are barely seeing their Latino population grow," said Raul Gonzalez, a senior education analyst with NCLR.

"Given recent statistics, the next generation of kids participating in Head Start will be largely Latino, and we need to identify places where we can better serve them."

According to figures from the National Association of Head Starts, 33 percent of the nearly 1 million children in Head Start are Hispanic. The group's figures also show that only 23 percent of the eligible Hispanic population is being served.

In Tarrant County, 45 percent of the 2,500 children in the program are Hispanic.

The nonprofit group in charge of Head Start in the county, Child Care Associates, doesn't have any figures on the number of eligible Hispanic children in Tarrant County, but it estimates that about 11,500 eligible children currently go unserved.

"We are a minority majority community, and issues affecting the Latino population are definitely going to affect the children that we serve," said John A. Whitcamp, president of Child Care Associates.

"We are nowhere near the level that we need to be. And this bill is doing nothing to change that."

Although Whitcamp said his centers are well-equipped and staffed to meet the needs of Hispanics, advocates say that many centers shy away from expanding their service to Spanish-speaking minorities for three main reasons:

The overall underfunding of the program.

In areas where Hispanic populations have just recently emerged, providers think it is too expensive to hire the bilingual instructors and buy the culturally representative material that may be needed to serve Hispanic children.