

awarded to the principal of high performing or significantly improved public schools to reward their good work. A reward is a powerful incentive to build on success and meet some of the areas which can make their school thrive. These grants could be for a specialized librarian, new books, and bonuses for excellent teachers, or even to support sports and recreation with a new basketball court. It is entirely up to the principal to decide. In addition, the bill includes \$5 million to support the very successful D.C. program to reconstitute the schools designated as in need of improvement by the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act. The Transformation School Initiative has successfully breathed new life into 15 of the lowest performing public schools in the District with innovative ways to reinvigorate teachers, reinvest parents, and get kids excited about going to school and excited about learning. We are very pleased to support these programs with \$13 million for public schools as part of the \$40 million School Improvement Fund created last year.

The second prong of the School Improvement Fund, \$13 million for public charter school, is supported by robust support to strengthen the chartering system. With 41 charters granted to date, the District has achieved the distinction of having the highest number of charter schools per capita. As such, the District is in a position to serve as leader in the effort to use charter schools to spur system-wide improvement from within our system of public education. Senator DEWINE and I maintain our commitment to serve as a full and equal partner in this endeavor.

It is important to note that while the primary reason for the rapid growth in the number of charter schools was the unmet desire of education reformers to find a way to "step out of the box" that had become our public school system, charter schools are by definition independent public schools. With their relative autonomy, charter schools are a way to provide greater educational choice and innovation while not abandoning the public school system. Recent studies show that the existence of a charter school in a district not only increases the quality of education available to the students served directly by the charter school but in all surrounding public schools. In addition, charter schools provide a healthy dose of competition into the public school system and have the effect of accelerating reforms and improvements in traditional public schools.

Despite the increased challenge of educating students with the greatest need, objective surveys and reports show that the academic progress among charter schools students outpacing that of their cohorts in traditional public schools. Those successes included gains in reading and math performances; test scores higher than district, state and neighborhood schools; increased parental involve-

ment; and higher attendance and fewer disciplinary problems.

Strengthening charter schools, which were created in the D.C. by Congress in the 1995 School Reform Act, is a primary tenant of our work to improve education. Pursuant to Section 120 of P.L. 106-522, the Fiscal Year 2001 DC Appropriations Act, the local government is prohibited from amending the School Reform Act. Therefore, Congress has continued our oversight responsibility of the charter school law this year. The bill fortifies the environment where strong, accountable, academically excellent charter schools flourish.

This bill includes language which will encourage public schools to convert to charter schools. The 1996 School Reform Act allows for traditional public schools to petition to convert to a public charter school, if the teachers and parents in the community want a more responsive and engaging school. However, to date, only one school, Paul Junior High, has exercised that option. We are not trying to say that every public school should be a charter school, but we support if the community of a particular school sees a benefit in becoming a charter school and can gain a majority consensus of that community, a conversion is possible.

In addition, we toughen oversight of chartering boards to better screen applications and strengthen oversight of existing schools. We think this will make a stronger public charter school community, and should not create any additional bureaucracy which would tamp down reform. Finally, we included language which will improve access to facilities for charter schools, which can be their greatest challenge. The buildings in which children learn are just as critical as the other tools available to make these kids a success.

Under the kind leadership of Chairman DEWINE, we have also invested in the welfare of the most vulnerable children in the District, those in the custody of the abuse and neglect welfare system. Just in the last week, the District has suffered the loss of another child, Angel Fleming, who was put in the custody of the Child and Family Services Agency.

The bill supports our priority of reforming child welfare by providing the tools necessary to the foster care system with \$5 million. We are funding for early intervention services to try to keep kids with relatives, rather than send them to temporary foster care homes. The bill also continues to ensure that all kids in foster care get mental health assessments and services. Finally, Senator DEWINE has ensured that an area often forgotten, foster parents, receive the respite services necessary and promote grassroots foster parent recruiting and training efforts.

This bill meets our Federal responsibility to the criminal justice system and infrastructure investments requested by the mayor and council. The

new family court, which embraces the ideal of one family-one judge, is fully funded and we continue to provide for their new building. In addition, the bill initiates a new investment in the administration of justice in the District by contributing \$8 million to the construction of a new forensics lab. This laboratory will alleviate contract pressure D.C. imposes on other Federal agencies, such as the FBI, to complete local forensic work. The bill also contributes to security and emergency preparedness in the Nation's capital with \$22 million to bolster the police and first responders. In addition to all of the important initiatives in the District this bill invests in, there is \$13 million for cleaning up the Anacostia River and providing recreation for the entire region and \$5 million for transportation improvements.

I want to thank the mayor of the District, Anthony Williams, the entire council, particularly the Chair Linda Cropp, and the D.C. Delegate to Congress ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON for their many contributions and advice in developing this bill. They are great partners for Chairman DEWINE and I to ensure the bill meet the needs of the District. I appreciate the chairman's consideration and our ability to work together on this bill.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 4850), as amended, was read the third time and passed, as follows:

(The bill will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

The Chair appointed Mr. DEWINE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BROWNBAC, Mr. STEVENS, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. INOUE conferees on the part of the Senate.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2830

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that S. 2830 is at the desk. I ask its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2830) to amend part A of title IV of the Social Security Act to promote healthy marriages and responsible fatherhood, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for its second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar in accordance with rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be read the second time on the next legislative day.

RESPONDING TO CONDITIONS IN BURMA UNDER THE ILLEGITIMATE RULE OF THE STATE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 431 and the Senate