

Memo: 5/29/03
To: All ICAA Members
From: John Colgan – ICAA’s Director of Public Policy
Re: Talking Points Concerning Rep. Castle’s U.S. House - Head Start Reauthorization Bill - HB 2210

As I mentioned to everyone this past Tuesday, legislation has been introduced in the House to reauthorize the Head Start Program. The sponsor of the School Readiness Act of 2003 is Representative Mike Castle (R-DE). The legislation would give states the option to administer the program, essentially block granting Head Start. This proposal would abolish the current federal-to-local structure of Head Start with serious consequences for program quality and function.

I asked you to call the Illinois member of the House Education and Workforce Committee – Representatives Judy Biggert (630-655-2052) and Danny Davis (773-533-7520). If you have not yet made the calls, please be polite and express appreciation for their thoughtful consideration. Threats or accusations against the President or members of Congress are never productive. If you want a recommendation for how to shape your message, I have provided some talking points below for your use.

Talking Points for U.S. Representatives Judy Biggert and Danny Davis

1. I hope that you will work to preserve the federal local relationship between the Head Start Program and local agencies that administer the program. In Illinois, where Head Start provides comprehensive child development and educational services to approximately 40,000 low-income children, the current system is working very well.
2. I have serious concerns about HB 2210. I believe a Head Start block grant is a bad idea because:
 - a. It attempts to fix something that is not broken.
 - b. There is no evidence that federal/local relationship between the Head Start Program and local agencies that administer the program is not working.
 - c. A block grant will roll federal Head Start money into an already stressed Illinois Budget. Some of these precious resources will be lost by creating a new state level bureaucracy and other unnecessary expenses.
 - d. I fear that a significant portion of Head Starts comprehensive approach to child development could be lost if HB 2210 is enacted due to the disproportionate level of attention the bill places on academic standards.

If you have questions, contact me at the above email address or call me at 217-789-0125. Thank you.