



## Federal Update – July 30, 2007

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### CHIP Update: Your Help is Needed!

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee voted 17-4 to pass a bill to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), including a \$35 billion increase in funding. Defying a veto threat from the White House, which opposes the new spending, the House has undertaken an even more ambitious increase of \$50 billion through the Children's Health and Medicare Improvement Act (CHAMP). The CHAMP Act would enable CHIP to cover five million more low-income children nationwide, bringing the total coverage under CHIP to 11 million children. Read Ways and Means Committee Chairman [Charles Rangel's \(D-NY\) statement](#) on the CHAMP Act.

The bill is scheduled for a vote on the floor of House tomorrow, and the vote will be very close. As you know, the reauthorization of CHIP is deeply connected to the pre-k agenda. Increasing access to children's health care is one of the best ways to begin building more comprehensive services into pre-k programs. Pre-K Now urges partner organizations to encourage their membership to contact their Members of Congress and ask them to support the bill.

Contact Federal Policy Fellow Matt Smith ([msmith@preknow.org](mailto:msmith@preknow.org)) for more information about the CHAMP Act and to receive advocacy tools that can be distributed to your lists.

### Rep. Mazie Hirono to Introduce Pre-K Incentive Grant Legislation This Week

Rep. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) plans to introduce a bill as early as tomorrow that would create a federal incentive grant program to help states improve the quality of their pre-k programs. The legislation has received crucial support from Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the Education and

Labor Committee, and may be included as a part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in the upcoming reauthorization. Pre-K Now strongly supports incorporating pre-k in NCLB in order to raise the profile of early education, improve federal funding for pre-k, and help coordinate with the K-12 system.

The bill creates two tiers of eligibility for states that want to enhance their pre-k programs. States will be eligible to receive funding depending on their current progress in implementing a high-quality system. The legislation includes strong provisions for supporting developmentally-appropriate curricula, well-trained teachers, favorable classroom environments, and comprehensive services.

See a [side-by-side comparison](#) of the Clinton, Casey, and Hirono bills.

### **Pre-K Now Executive Director Libby Doggett Testifies with Sens. Clinton and Casey at Center for American Progress**

Pre-K Now Executive Director Libby Doggett testified on Wednesday at a Center for American Progress forum to highlight two separate pieces of pre-k legislation, introduced by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Sen. Robert Casey (D-PA). Ms. Doggett praised both bills as “new benchmarks for federal investment in pre-k” that “draw on 40 years of research and best practices at the state level.” [Read her full remarks.](#)

Sens. Clinton and Casey championed the pre-k movement and called for enhanced federal support for pre-k. Sen. Clinton urged policymakers “to recognize that voluntary universal preschool is no longer something to be talked about. We must act on it.” She added that “the stars are finally coming into alignment” for a national commitment to high-quality pre-k. Sen. Casey was equally emphatic about the need for high-quality pre-k, asserting that “every child is born with a bright light burning inside them” and that pre-k is essential not only for the economy but also to “keep that bright light burning in the life of a child.” View a [full transcript](#) of the event.

Pre-K Now supports both the Clinton and Casey bills. Sen. Clinton’s bill would help states create pre-k for all, starting with four year olds and children living close to poverty, while providing funds for program enhancement. Her legislation would accomplish these goals as a separate title of No Child Left Behind. Sen. Casey’s proposal would target funding to providers that serve children up to 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold and also help improve quality. The program called for in Sen. Casey’s bill would be administered through the Department of Health and Human Services.

### **Rep. George Miller Outlines Goals for NCLB Reauthorization**

On Monday, July 30, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) described his plans for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in a speech to the National Press Club. Miller, the Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, commented on the spectrum of concerns that have

been raised about NCLB since the act was passed in 2001. Foremost among the proposals that Miller referred to was a redefinition of “annual yearly progress” to measure the growth in a students’ ability relative to their previous performance rather than to an objective standard. The speech is the first formal insight Miller has provided on his plans for NCLB, which have remained closely guarded by committee staff. His speech is available at the [Ed and Labor Committee website](#).

Pre-K Now will continue to monitor progress on NCLB and push for changes that would support state pre-k programs.

### **Higher Education Act Reauthorization Passes the Senate**

On Tuesday, July 24, the Senate passed S. 1642 by an overwhelming vote of 95-0. Introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), the bill reauthorizes the Higher Education Act of 1965. The bill includes language to expand student loan relief for pre-k teachers and to support early childhood educator training programs at higher education institutions. View [Sen. Kennedy’s comments](#) on the passage of the bill.

The bill has drawn criticism from the White House for its provisions to increase the federal aid directed to students by reducing subsidies to private lenders. Pre-K Now will continue to monitor the bill’s progress and ensure that the early childhood educator language is preserved in conference.

### **Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bills Await Conference Review**

Both the House and Senate have passed their versions of the 2008 Labor-HHS-Education spending bills, which will determine the amount of funding provided by Congress for crucial education programs. The House provides a \$2.1 billion increase for programs under NCLB, a \$75 million increase for *Head Start*, and a \$75 million increase for the Child Care Block Grant. [Read a summary](#) from the House Appropriations Committee staff.

The Senate bill has not yet gone to a floor vote. The Appropriations Committee’s final mark would increase funding for grants under Title I and school improvement by a total of \$1.4 billion and would increase *Head Start* by \$200 million. The Child Care Block Grant is flat-funded in the Senate bill but may be increased by an amendment to be offered before a final vote.

The White House has issued veto threats on both bills. The president has opposed expanded funding for stem cell research in the Senate bill and the overall spending increase in the House version. Pre-K Now will continue to work with the National Head Start Association and child care advocates to encourage that all of these programs receive robust funding. Monitor the status of Congressional appropriations measures [here](#).

**Congress to Begin August Recess on Monday, August 6th**

Congress will begin its month-long August recess on Monday. While staffers will remain in Washington to work on NCLB and other major pieces of legislation, Members will return to their districts and be available for meetings with constituents. Remember to take this opportunity to meet with your representatives and keep pre-k at the center of their attention!