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July 9, 2003

Is your state's Head Start population growing?

Nearly half of all states experienced growth in Head Start-eligible population between 2000-2001.

Dear Colleague:

A recent study found that children participating in a quality early-childhood program, such as Head Start, that includes a strong health as well as a parent involvement component, had higher rates of high school completion and lower rates of school dropout. However, two-out-of-five children eligible for services cannot find a slot in a Head Start classroom and only three percent of children eligible for Early Head Start are able to participate due to lack of funding. Children are on waiting lists to enter the local Head Start program and many other early-childhood programs throughout the country.

In states with increased population growth and high poverty rates the percentages of eligible children unable to take part in Head Start is even higher. Head Start programs in high growth states are further penalized because outdated census data fails to reflect current state population changes.

I introduced the High Growth Head Start Assistance Act, H.R. 2563, in order to remedy this problem. The High Growth Head Start Assistance Act authorizes a total of \$50 million a year from FY 2004 to 2008 for a grant program targeting states with increased growth in children zero to five who live under the poverty level. Using the most recent statistics available, the High Growth Head Start Assistance Act will ensure that Head Start programs in high growth states are given additional resources to provide essential services to more children who are in need.

To find out if your state has a growing number of children eligible for Head Start, please see the 2000-2001 census data shown on the back of this page.

If you are interested in cosponsoring the High Growth Head Start Assistance Act or would like additional information, please contact Shannon von Felden of my staff at 5-5965.

Sincerely,



SHELLEY BERKLEY
Member of Congress