

As we consider legislation re-authorizing Head Start, we should have as our goal supporting and building on one of the premier preschool programs in our country. Head Start, a program that began during the “War on Poverty” in 1965, is one of the most researched and evaluated preschool programs in the nation and it has both social liberals and fiscal conservatives in agreement about its success and cost effectiveness. Its continuation and expansion has been as a result of bipartisan support.

It is extremely disconcerting that as the Bush Administration is dealing with this legislation that instead of supporting states to provide better oversight and coordination with their other early childhood and Pre-K programs in order to improve educational opportunities for all of our children, they are seeing it as an opportunity to send more programs and directives to the States in the form of unfunded mandates. While local administration has been successful and should not be undermined, States should be more involved in the oversight of these programs in order to better coordinate early childhood quality initiatives in the States and to assure more collaboration and the development of a seamless transition for these programs.

As the legislation continues to be reviewed and moved forth, we would support that some of the new and innovative ideas be looked at and considered. Some form of experimentation is worth attempting and many Governors have shown a serious willingness to help these youngsters reach their potential. The establishment of Centers of Excellence at the local level nominated by the Governor in order to honor and share exemplary programs, capture and disseminate best practices, and identify barriers and opportunities to coordinate service delivery would do much to continue improving the system.

The reauthorization of this legislation is critical to truly “leaving no child behind”. I **(we)** **(depending if this is Gov. Richardson or Dem Governors)** would encourage the Administration to work on building the bipartisan support and supporting States to get more involved in order to improve education for all our children.