

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act to strengthen Head Start, the nation’s primary early childhood development program for low-income youth. The legislation reauthorizes Head Start programs for the next five years and includes several provisions that will ensure access for more children and improve the focus and quality of early education.

“There is no greater investment we can make than in our children and their future,” stated Congressman Steny Hoyer. “During National Education Week, it is fitting that we reaffirm our commitment to education by passing legislation that will reinvigorate the nation’s efforts to provide all American children with the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.”

Head Start has been the premiere early childhood education program for low-income children for more than 40 years. Head Start has served more than 20 million children and families in that time, and it remains a cornerstone in this country’s efforts to close the achievement gap and combat poverty. There are currently close to 12,000 Maryland children who are enrolled in the Head Start Program.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 will revitalize Head Start and help more children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed. The bipartisan legislation improves teacher and classroom quality, strengthens Head Start’s focus on school readiness, expands access to Head Start for more children, ensures that centers are well-run, boosts coordination between Head Start and state and local programs, and improves comprehensive services that help children by helping their families.

The House-Senate Head Start Conference Report will next be considered by the Senate before going to the President’s desk.

###