

ELLCOTT CITY, MD – Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) joined Former Governor Parris Glendening, Interim Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Bernard Sadusky, Former Maryland State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick, Assistant State Superintendent for Early Childhood Education Rolf Grafwallner, Judy Center Specialist Cheryl DeAtley, and others, in recognizing excellence in Maryland’s early childhood education and family support programs known as Judy Centers. The awards luncheon, hosted by the Judith P. Hoyer Foundation and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), recognized this year’s honorees: the St. Mary’s County Judy Center and Overlook Judy Center in Garrett County. Below are Congressman Hoyer’s remarks as prepared for delivery:

“Thank you, Nancy, for your warm introduction, and I want to congratulate this year’s winners for the hard work they put in each day as well as their dedication to the important work to which my wife, Judy, devoted her career.

“Maryland’s Judy Centers provide a full range of essential services for thousands of families who need them most. They have made our state a leader in the integration of early childhood education with health and social service delivery, and their successes are being studied and copied around the country.

“Wendy (St. Mary’s County Judy Center) and Jessica (Overlook Judy Center, Garrett County) are examples of the outstanding staff working day-in and day-out to help close the achievement gap into which too many of our children have fallen even before they start kindergarten. Your work – and that of your colleagues – will have an impact beyond the families you serve. It is now widely understood that a good education and a healthy start as a young child can greatly expand the range of opportunities one has later in life. This means the prospect of earning a college degree and learning skills for a good job. Early childhood services like those you provide will have wide, positive effect on our economy and society for many years to come.

“In 2011-2012, 83% of Maryland kindergarteners are fully school-ready, up from 81% last school-year. Maryland’s school-readiness has now increased by a stunning 34 points – a 69% improvement – over the past decade. Additionally, the percentage of kindergarteners from

low-income households who are fully school-ready rose from 34% in 2001-2002 to 76% in 2011-2012. This is remarkable progress and directly attributable to your work in the Judy Centers.

“The great Marylander Frederick Douglass once said: ‘It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.’ That is a view shared by our next speaker, who made it possible for Judy Centers to be established across Maryland.

“Nancy and I met with Governor Glendening in the summer of 1999 to discuss Judy’s passion and vision for early childhood education and comprehensive services for children and families. Without hesitation, he embraced the concept. We all agreed that Maryland could be the model for such a program and began drawing up a plan.

“In December 1999, the governor announced \$20 million over five years to create Judy Centers. The following may, the ‘Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Program’ was enacted. That December, the Maryland state department of education announced the funding for the first thirteen centers, followed by an additional eleven in November 2001.

“Governor Glendening championed this cause, and without his support the successes we see today would not have been possible. I join in thanking him for his leadership on this issue during his governorship, and I congratulate Wendy and Jessica again for their awards today. I know Judy would have been incredibly proud of you both and grateful for everything you are doing for the future of our state.

“I am now honored to introduce Governor Parris Glendening.”