



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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MATSUI DISAPPOINTED WITH LOSS OF BIPARTISAN HEAD START BILL *Expresses dissatisfaction with addition of religious discrimination amendment*

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) voted against the reauthorization of Head Start because of a provision added that allows some Head Start centers to discriminate against job applicants for teaching and staff positions on the basis of the applicants' religion.

“There is a bigger, more fundamental issue at stake. Head Start emerged from a Civil Rights platform of equality and minimizing the reach of poverty in this nation,” stated Matsui. “Yet this proposed provision is about allowing discrimination. Discrimination only serves to divide us. It pits one individual against another – something we see far too often. This is not a lesson children should learn.”

This bipartisan bill makes a number of changes to the program intended to enhance the school readiness of the children that Head Start serves through an increased emphasis on academic performance. Also included are provisions intended to improve teacher quality and promote better coordination at the local level between Head Start and pre-kindergarten. Additionally, the bill strengthens Head Start program accountability and increases monitoring. The bipartisan bill was unanimously reported out of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

“We are all aware of just how critical a child's first years are,” stated Matsui. “And when I visited some Head Start Centers earlier this year it was clearly evident that this is a program that is so much more than just early education and reading skills. It is also about health care, nutritional and social benefits for the children as well as their parents. Head Start is about ensuring children are on the right path as they begin their education careers.”

Unfortunately, having reported out a bipartisan bill, House Republicans brought forward a highly controversial, divisive religious discrimination amendment that would – for the first time in Head Start's 33-year history – allow a faith-based-sponsored Head Start program to use federal taxpayer dollars to discriminate against teachers and other employees solely because of their religion.

“Head start has proven itself, time and again, to be an effective program and a worthwhile investment of federal dollars,” concluded Matsui. “For every dollar invested, we see a \$7 dollar return. Imagine those returns on the stock market...an investment of \$100K means that ultimately you would see \$700K in your account.”

Even though the House of Representatives passed the bill, the companion legislation, S. 1107, has yet to be addressed by the full Senate.

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