

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted for the conference report on H.R. 1429, Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, which would improve and reauthorize federal funding for Head Start programs.

“As the father of three children, I know just how critical early education and development programs are for our children – giving them the tools they need to succeed in the workforce and in life,” **said Arcuri**. “The national Head Start program has helped millions of children, and the bill we passed today would allow the program to continue to serve our communities. This bipartisan legislation improves teacher and classroom quality and makes sure that parents and families are part of a child’s education and development. This Congress is committed to expanding educational opportunities to all American children and building a world class workforce.”

Head Start programs are locally designed and are administered by over 1,600 public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies. In fiscal year 2005, Head Start funded enrollment for 906,993 children nation wide. In New York, there were 49,127 children in roughly 200 Head Start programs in 2005.

“Children and families benefit from their involvement in Head Start as we prepare children for Kindergarten,” **said Terry DeFelice, Head Start Director for The Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc** . “Many low income children lag behind other children in their educational and social development and Head Start is critical to their future success in school.”

The Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc. Head Start program serves more than 275 low income children and families in Cayuga County with programs that go beyond education, including health, nutrition, social services, and mental health and disability services.

The Conference Report on H.R.1429:

- Authorizes total funding of \$7.35 billion for Fiscal Year 2008, \$7.65 billion for Fiscal Year 2009, and \$7.99 billion for Fiscal Year 2010 – allowing tens of thousands more children access to the program.
- Improves Head Start’s workforce quality by increasing funding for teacher salaries and professional development, strengthening training and technical assistance, and improving

teacher qualifications.

- Updates the Head Start program by using the latest science on early childhood brain development to strengthen the focus on school readiness.
- Develops improved cooperation between Head Start and state and local child care programs to increase full-day and full-year services and improve coordination between Head Start and local early education programs to better meet the needs of working families.
- Strengthens Head Start's linkages with the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and with state health services, mental health services, and family services.
- Increases accountability by devising a new system of application review that assesses program quality and makes low-quality centers reapply - allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to more quickly strip bad programs of funding.
- Ensures that parents have a strong voice in how Head Start centers are run.
- Prioritizes expansion for Early Head Start, which serves children from birth to age three, so more children can receive Head Start during the critical development years when their brains are growing the fastest.
- Head Start was created in 1965 and provides the most vulnerable preschool-aged children with a pre-kindergarten education, health and nutrition programs, and social development activities. It has served more than 20 million children and families in that time.

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