
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Examining GAO’s Review of Selected Head Start Grantees”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Examining GAO’s Review of Selected Head Start Grantees”*

Good afternoon.

We’re here today to learn about what appears to be serious, fraudulent behavior uncovered by the Government Accountability Office during its investigation into the enrollment and eligibility process at some Head Start programs.

We will also hear what actions the Department of Health and Human Services is taking to strengthen its oversight and accountability of Head Start programs.

I am very disappointed that there are Head Start programs and employees at the center of these allegations of fraud.

Upon learning of this investigation, I immediately wrote a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius urging her to take swift action to review the claims of fraudulent activities among some Head Start employees.

Secretary Sebelius and I both agree that we have an obligation to ensure Head Start is held to the highest standard, which starts with the people who enroll children in the program.

One in five children under the age of five live in poverty in America, and less than 50 percent of the children who are eligible for Head Start are able to attend this critical program.

So it is vital that Head Start enrollment procedures are followed and that taxpayer dollars are used as intended.

Unfortunately, GAO has found that some Head Start employees are betraying the integrity of the program.

The behavior on the part of some Head Start employees that we are going to hear about today is reprehensible and completely unacceptable. I want to thank the GAO for bringing it to our attention.

I believe the Head Start community will likewise be outraged by this behavior because the majority of employees that work at Head Start represent the program with integrity and with a deep commitment to help the future of this country.

We know that if you invest in children before they enter the kindergarten classroom, they will have a much higher chance at success in elementary school and through their lives.

Head Start receives bipartisan support for billions in federal financial assistance. It is imperative that the program be transparent, ethical, accountable and maintain the confidence of taxpayers.

We intend to continue our oversight of this program to ensure prompt, effective enforcement by the Department puts a stop to this fraudulent conduct.

Head Start works for our kids and we are here today to help make sure that it will continue to do so.

I want to thank our witnesses and look forward to hearing about what can and will be done to fix this problem.

Thank you for being here today.

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