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## *House of Representatives*

# FILNER DEMANDS REPORT ON HEAD START TEACHER RETENTION LEVELS!

### HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I just would read the amendment: "Not later than one year after implementation of the Head Start teacher qualifications and development under amendments made by this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to Congress a report on Head Start teacher retention levels."

I rise to support this amendment, and I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Woolsey), my good friend, who for the 13 years she has been here has been a tireless advocate for Head Start and all other education programs that provide access of all our country's children to the quality education that they deserve. I know she looks forward to the day, as I do, that we do get full funding for the Head Start program for all children who are eligible in this Nation, and we will work with the gentlewoman toward that end.

We all know and we have heard today from both sides of the aisle about the importance and quality of Head Start. It has played, for four decades now, a vital role in the lives of thousands of children and parents across the country, and certainly in my home area of San Diego and Imperial Counties of California.

The government gets it right on Head Start. We are providing opportunities for children in underserved areas where parents may not be able to afford preschool so they can begin their schooling with a running or Head Start.

I have witnessed Head Start's benefits firsthand at different levels. Before entering Congress, I taught for 20 years as a history professor at San Diego State University, and I will tell my colleagues that, even at that level, the students who had been through Head Start as children owe that program a great deal for their getting through college, and they may not even have been able to get through high school without it.

I was on the San Diego school board for 4 years, where I watched children successfully matriculate into elementary schools from Head Start programs from all around our city. It was clear then, and remains equally clear today, that the work of Head Start plays an enormously significant role within our education community.

Now, as we know, in this year's reauthorization, Congress is implementing the strongest requirements for teacher qualifications and development in Head Start's history. Teachers will have to have more incoming experience and face more on-the-job professional development than ever before.

I commend the committee and I commend this Congress for taking that action, but we have to remember that, as we add these more stringent requirements and more accountability and more professional development, we are going to have to fund the resources necessary to achieve that.

In fact, we have to answer the question: Might we be pricing Head Start right out of the teaching market? Right now, teaching is a profession that has more openings than can be filled. When we drastically increase the work requirements without increasing the salary levels, there is a risk of running many successful and experienced teachers right out of the program. If we narrow Head Start's hiring pool, it may be forced to compete with institutions that have greater funding and resources to hire. So without providing far more funding than this bill offers, hiring may become difficult as prospective teachers may go elsewhere.

We have seen that, in another unfunded mandate, the so-called No Child Left Behind Act, which created tougher standards, and we all support that, but Congress did not provide the money to attract and hire the best teachers. So since there is a

real possibility of increased teacher requirements leading to a dropoff in the number of experienced Head Start teachers, I hope the House will accept my amendment, which calls for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to submit to Congress a study reporting on Head Start's teacher retention levels. This study will be completed within one year of the enactment of the new regulations.

With this study, we will have an early look at the impact of these regulations. It will paint a picture of whether Head Start teachers are staying and meeting the new requirements or whether these new requirements are inadvertently driving experienced teachers from such an important program as Head Start. These early results will tell us if we are on the correct path or if we need to modify some of the rules before there is more damage.