



Senators Feinstein and Voinovich Introduce Bill to Expand Loan
Forgiveness Program to Head Start Teachers
January 24, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and George Voinovich (R-Ohio) today introduced legislation to expand the Federal loan forgiveness program to include Head Start teachers.

“We must continue to look for ways to improve the Head Start program so that children leave the program with the cognitive skills they need to succeed in school and in life,” Senator Feinstein said. **“By offering loan forgiveness incentives to teachers, we’ll encourage recent graduates, current Head Start teachers without a degree, and college students to enter and remain in the Head Start field.”**

“Since my days as Ohio’s governor, I have been a strong advocate for early childhood education and development,” Senator Voinovich said. **“Senator Feinstein is also strongly committed to this issue and I’m proud to work with her to help recruit the best and brightest teachers for programs that serve our youngest, most at-risk children.”**

The Head Start program serves over 900,000 low-income children and their families. A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), found a strong relationship between the education level of Head Start teachers and classroom quality.

Nationwide, only 30 percent of Head Start teachers have completed a baccalaureate or advanced degree program. In California, that number is even smaller - approximately 18 percent of Head Start teachers have completed a bachelor’s degree. By expanding the Federal loan forgiveness program, Head Start teachers could have up to \$5,000 of their student loans forgiven in exchange for 5 years of teaching.

Several studies confirm the importance of providing low-income children with the opportunity early on to gain basic cognitive skills:

- A study conducted on a preschool program in Chicago showed that for every dollar invested in Head Start, \$8 was saved by society in projected costs. Additionally, 26 percent more children were likely to finish high school and 40 percent were less likely to repeat a grade.
- The National Head Start Association found that for every dollar invested in Head Start, at least \$2.50 is saved because participants need less remedial education and

are less likely to utilize public assistance programs or be involved with the juvenile justice system than non-Head Start peers.

###