

**Remarks of the Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
Statement at Committee Markup of H.R. 2343
The Education Begins At Home Act
Wednesday, June 18, 2008**

The Committee will now consider H.R. 2343, the Education Begins at Home Act.

More and more, we are learning that investing in children during their earliest years is essential to their success in school and in life.

Research tells us that the parent-child relationships that form during the first three years of children's lives – when 85 percent of their brain growth occurs – are especially influential on children's cognitive and behavioral development.

Children with active and involved parents are more likely to get good grades, graduate from high school, and attend college.

Early childhood home visitation programs focus on the needs of parents and children from birth through age five.

These programs provide parents with a vital support system to help them cope with the day-to-day stresses of parenting and help them better understand their children's development. Parents also receive medical advice and access to health care.

For children, these programs can help boost school readiness, improve their health and behavior, and help them build closer bonds with their parents.

As we learned at our hearing last week, numerous studies show that early childhood home visitation programs are effective in helping parents identify and address developmental delays and disabilities in their children early on, reducing rates of child abuse, and improving student achievement.

The Nurse-Family Partnership home visitation program, for example, which provides nurse visits to at-risk mothers, has cut rates of abuse and neglect of at-risk children in half.

This program also bears significant fiscal benefits for our country – yielding an average of five dollars in savings for every dollar invested, according to analysts at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

We also heard the stories of families whose lives have been changed by these programs.

Julie Fenley is a mother of two whose husband serves in the military. She told us how the parent educator she worked with through the Parents as Teachers program in Norfolk, Virginia helped her find medical and financial resources when her husband was away at training, and provided invaluable emotional support while she was raising her young kids.

Laura Ditka, a Deputy District Attorney in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, shared the story of Jane, a recovering heroin addict who became involved with her local Nurse-Family Partnership program.

The home nurse provided through the program helped Jane overcome a challenging past of physical and sexual abuse, raise a healthy toddler, and complete her GED. Jane is now close to graduating from community college.

The Education Begins At Home Act would help countless other families benefit from these programs and the opportunities they can provide.

The bill would create, for the first time, a federal funding stream to help states and communities expand access to high quality programs.

It would authorize \$400 million in grants to states, tribal organizations, and territories over three years.

The bill would also create two competitive grant programs of \$50 million each to expand access to home visitation services for English language learners in military families.

This legislation is about strengthening our nation's families by giving them the support they need to pursue their dreams.

I'd like to thank Congressmen Danny Davis and Todd Platts for their leadership on this bill.

I am confident that we can continue this committee's bipartisanship on early childhood education issues by passing this legislation with strong support today.

Thank you.