

(**Washington D.C.**) - Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA-03) today voted to reauthorize the Head Start Act through H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start Act of 2007.

The bill received broad bipartisan support and passed by a vote of 365-48.

H.R. 1429 reauthorizes and improves the Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

These programs provide early childhood education and development services to almost 1 million children each year.

During consideration of the bill, the House also defeated a Republican amendment. This motion would have allowed some Head Start centers to discriminate on the basis of religion for the first time in the program's 42 year history.

The inclusion of this provision in Head Start reauthorization bills has stalled reauthorization of this critical program in the last two Congresses.

Rep. Scott was one of the leaders of the effort to defeat the motion.

"Passage of this bill moves us a major step closer to reauthorizing the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Both are critical to early childhood education and development of children across the nation," said Rep. Scott. "And I am even more pleased that Congress soundly rejected Republican efforts to write discrimination into one of the government's most effective programs. If the Republican amendment had passed, we would have turned the clock back on civil rights at a time when discrimination in federally funded programs was accepted public policy. Since 1965, Head Start students have learned that their parents were entitled to be fairly considered for employment at a Head Start program regardless of race or religion. The passage of the Republican amendment would have subjected the next generation of Head Start students to a different lesson; fortunately, the amendment was defeated."

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