

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN E. FOGARTY, DEMOCRAT OF RHODE ISLAND, ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO PROMOTE THE EDUCATION OF MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN.

I am today re-introducing a bill to encourage the expansion of teaching and research in the education of mentally retarded children. The bill authorizes direct federal grants to college and state educational agencies to promote teacher training and research in the education of mentally retarded children. It follows in almost all respects the bill which I introduced in the House of Representatives during the last session of Congress, differing from it only with regard to coverage. The new bill extends coverage to all U.S. Territories and Possessions whereas the original bill was confined to the States alone.

At the present time there are approximately 1.5 million school-age children who are so mentally retarded as to need special educational help. Authorities advise that with the proper training at least one-half of these children could become self-supporting citizens. This certainly represents a strong challenge and its accomplishment would indeed be an impressive economic achievement. When considered with the even more impressive humanitarian arguments for federal action in this field, it graphically points up the urgency of the need for this legislation.

Shortage of trained teachers and shortage of facilities for training teachers are considered the two most important obstacles to expansion of educational services for mentally retarded children. The legislation which I have proposed would strike at these obstacles - principally by doing these things.

1. By authorizing the Commissioner of Education to make grants to public and non-profit schools of higher learning (college or over) for the training of professional personnel. This personnel will either conduct research on the mentally retarded

or will conduct the training of teachers in that field. Such grants could be used by the school to cover the cost of courses or to establish fellowships.

2. By authorizing the Commissioner of Education to make grants to State educational agencies for their use in providing fellowships for the training of persons to teach mentally retarded children or as supervisors of such teachers.

By thus attacking the problem at its roots, the bill which I am sponsoring would go a long way toward correcting the situation. It would, in addition, accomplish this objective by complementing the efforts of State and local school boards in a manner entirely in keeping with the traditional role of the Federal government in education.

As Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health, Education and Welfare, I had the opportunity and the distinct privilege of originating federal assistance in the area of mental retardation. In the last Congress I was successful in securing an appropriation of \$750,000 for research on the problem - the first appropriation ever made for research on mental retardation. As a result of this action increased emphasis was placed on the subject and a ray of hope extended to the parents of these "exceptional children." The next step is to eliminate the bottleneck of a shortage of teachers and training facilities. My bill will do just that and I am hopeful that it will receive the approval of the Congress with no undue delay.