

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, U. S. REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND ON SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN THE EDUCATION OF MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN, AUGUST 1958.

Mr. Speaker:

You know that for a good many years I have had a deep interest in programs which would improve the health, welfare, and education of those persons in the Nation who are handicapped. A few years ago my attention was drawn to the serious problem of those with mental retardation. Many such individuals are themselves neglected and their families are in distress because of lack of understanding of their problem, and because of inadequate facilities to help them. Yet it is known that large numbers of mentally retarded individuals could become contributing citizens and well adjusted members of their families and communities if care and education are given to them at the right time.

Within the last few years the Congress has repeatedly taken action to aid in developing and strengthening in the Nation a balanced program for the mentally retarded, including services in health, welfare, rehabilitation, and education. As you know, I have strongly supported such action in the belief that it would encourage and stimulate the

8/22
9/10

development of well-rounded services and hasten the acceptance of the mentally retarded into the community.

Today I would like to point to a gap in our program of aid.

I refer to the serious problem of inadequate personnel to conduct programs of special education for the Nation's approximately 1,000,000 school-age children with varying degrees of mental retardation.

It is my understanding that the goals of a good educational program for exceptional children or for special education include at least the following three major parts: (1) the search for knowledge through research which will form a basis for improving special education programs; (2) the need for extending and improving the schools and classes in local communities; (3) the development of more and better qualified teaching personnel.

The conduct of research and extension of school programs are both dependent upon the availability of well qualified educators with specialization in the field of mental retardation, and yet, according to the Office of Education, only about 10,000 or 15,000 teachers would be

needed if all of the mentally retarded children were to have suitable specialized educational opportunity.

The Congress recognized the need for research in education on such basic matters as the characteristics of mentally retarded school-age children, methods of teaching them, and factors in the school program which make for adjustment in the family and community.

In 1957, as you will recall, I took the initiative in the Appropriations Committee to request that \$675,000 in the Office of Education appropriation for cooperative research be set aside for mental retardation. Many of you know that leaders in the education of exceptional children in colleges and universities and state education agencies had already identified urgent problems needing research, and that request were very promptly made for the funds. As a result, the Office of Education made a beginning by entering into contracts with state educational agencies, and colleges and universities widely spread throughout the Nation for 42 studies during the fiscal year 1957. Since that time 11 others have been brought under contract.

Judging from the reports, the stimulating effect of this new program has already been felt throughout the country.

While the research studies under the provisions of Public Law 531 explore a wide range of topics, in general they cover: (1) definition and identification of the mentally retarded; (2) learning characteristics and responses of mentally retarded children; (3) language and communication difficulties and certain physical limitations as they relate to the learning of children classified as mentally retarded; (4) teaching methods and procedures; (5) the effects of different types of school organizations; (6) miscellaneous other problems, such as the rural isolated child or the effect of the school program on the post-school adjustment of the mentally retarded child.

This bill is essentially like the one I introduced and like several others sponsored by others of you during the first session of the present Congress, and is almost identical to S.395 which was passed by the Senate in the first session. This proposed legislation would aid in preparing highly qualified leadership personnel at the doctoral and

master's levels in the education of the mentally retarded. Persons prepared under the provisions of this legislation would qualify to:

(1) direct college and university programs for the preparation of teachers of the mentally retarded; (2) direct and supervise programs for mentally retarded children in local school systems, and in state departments of education; and (3) conduct research in the education of the mentally retarded. This proposed legislation would supplement the provisions of Public Law 531, 83d Congress, and in no way overlap with the provisions of that law.

According to data collected by the Office of Education, there may be as many as 15 colleges and universities with some facilities to immediately conduct doctoral programs in the education of the mentally retarded. All of these need strengthening either by additional staff or facilities in order to accommodate as many candidates for advanced degrees as are needed for the Nation's educational program. It would also make it possible to develop some new centers in colleges and universities in regions where opportunities do not exist for advanced

training in the education of the mentally retarded.

According to an Office of Education study, in 1953-54 there were 40 colleges in the Nation offering some opportunities for the preparation of teachers of the mentally retarded. However, the same 40 colleges reported only 28 instructors devoting full time to the preparation of teachers of the mentally retarded; 64 staff members were also giving "part time" to instruction of this program. Relatively few of the colleges and universities (perhaps 15) appeared to have the facilities to conduct doctoral programs in this field. Many of the others seemed to be inadequately staffed and otherwise ill equipped even for the training of undergraduate students in this area. The same colleges reported (in 1953) the granting of only 4 doctoral degrees and 130 master's degrees in the field of mental retardation. While the situation has improved somewhat since the Office of Education study was made, additional information from a more limited survey revealed the situation is currently almost as critical as it was in 1953-54.

It appears that there is need for the development of some new centers. Of the 15 colleges and universities which now seem to be prepared to initiate or expand doctoral programs, 11 are in either the Northeast or the Middle West. There are 2 in the South, 1 in the Southwest, and 1 to serve the Rocky Mountain states and the Northwest.

The ultimate goal of all our efforts is to give education and care to children and youth so they will be as well prepared for adult life as possible. The basic objective of this legislation is to provide traineeships at the graduate level which would be financially adequate to attract promising individuals who would then become the directors of college and university programs, of local school programs, and of research studies. It appears that this is the best contribution the Federal Government could make to alleviate the shortage of manpower in the education of the mentally retarded.

If this legislation were enacted, it would increase the leadership throughout the country and hasten the time, in my judgment, when the state and local school systems and the institutions of higher

learning will be in a better position to provide the teachers needed
by the children.

I, therefore earnestly request favorable consideration of
this measure.