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Congress of the United States  
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March 11, 1980

Dear Colleague:

The President's new youth initiative is, to me, a very disappointing and misdirected approach to the worsening problem of hard-core unemployment among our nation's young people. Because I believe it would be irresponsible for the Congress to give another billion dollars to the same public schools that are failing to provide educational and occupational skills to hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged youths, I am introducing, as an alternative to the education title of the Administration bill, the ALTERNATIVE AND WORK-SITE EDUCATION ACT OF 1980.

The major thrust of this innovative legislation would be to support local alternative education programs run by non-profit community-based organizations in areas of great need. Direct links between these organizations and local employers would be established to provide jobs or job training to students enrolled in the alternative education program. Basic education and skills specifically related to work would be taught in the classroom, but eight to twenty hours of each student's week would be spent earning a minimum wage or more at a job site. Low teacher-student ratios, intensive counseling, direct parent involvement, year-round operation, and stringent evaluations would also be features of these programs.

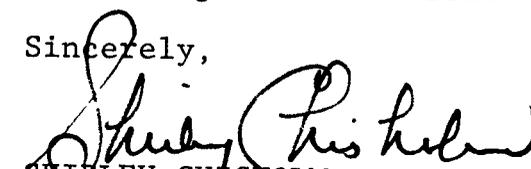
In addition, my bill would: (1) establish within the Department of Education an "Office of Alternative and Work-Site Education" under the Assistant Secretary for Research and Improvement; (2) mandate national and local occupational surveys to determine probable needs of employers, and; (3) create a National Clearinghouse on Alternative and Work-Site Education to collect and disseminate information on related programs.

This is not a proposal for experimental or demonstration projects. The Urban League's street academies, the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, O.I.C.'s Career Intern Program, the Harbor Learning Center in Baltimore, and the Alternative Learning Center in Morgantown, West Virginia are only a few of countless non-public entities that have succeeded in serving youths abandoned by the public school system. Now is the time to provide basic federal grants to them and their imitators on a large scale; before another generation of unskilled ill-prepared dropouts spills onto our streets.

While some public school systems can, and do, offer alternative education plans, their existence hangs on the whim and generosity of the local school board. I hope innovative and alternative teaching methods are adopted by more public schools, but I believe this is likelier to happen as successful non-profit institutions teach, train, and find jobs for "difficult" youths.

The ALTERNATIVE AND WORK-SITE EDUCATION ACT OF 1980 holds out real hope for today's and tomorrow's unemployed teens. I would welcome and value your cosponsorship. Please call me, or Brenda Pillors or Bob Frishman of my staff, at #56231 to join in the bill's introduction.

Sincerely,

  
SHIRLEY CHISHOLM  
Member of Congress

COMPARISON

CONGRESSWOMAN CHISHOLM'S "ALTERNATIVE  
AND WORK-SITE EDUCATION ACT OF 1980"

ADMINISTRATION'S "YOUTH EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
ACT" (TITLE II OF YOUTH ACT OF 1980)

BASIC THRUST	Support local alternative education programs run by <u>non-profit community-based organizations</u> in areas of greatest need.	Promote mastery of basic and employment skills among disadvantaged youth through locally-developed <u>school-based</u> programs.
TARGET OF FUNDS	Competitively-awarded grants from a new "Office of Alternative and Work-Site Education" directly to year-round programs in poorest communities serving youths unsuccessful in public school systems.	Funds allocated to state educational agencies which channel money to local educational agencies. Local superintendents and principals devise and select school-wide programs.
WORK EXPERI- ENCE	Mandated links with local employers, 8-20 hours of each student's week spent at paid employment or training outside the classroom.	Promote a partnership among educators, employment and training officers, and private sector employers that effectively links education, training and work experiences.
ACCOUNT- ABILITY	Independent evaluator selected by the Secretary of Education to assess achievements of alternative education programs during and after funding.	Three-year plans submitted by principals to local educational agencies.
PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS	Many examples, such as OIC's Career Intern Program and the Urban League's street academies, demonstrate success of non-public entities in motivating and teaching public-school "failures".	High public school dropout rate (45% in New York City), lack of basic skills among high-school dropouts and graduates, and high teen unemployment rates, give little hope that another billion dollars to public schools will be effective.