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LIFE WITH BIG BROTHER

U.S. government: We know parenting better than you

Proposals would give Washington unprecedented control over kids

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By Chelsea Schilling
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The U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to debate two bills that could give the federal government unprecedented control over the way parents raise their children – even providing funds for state workers to come into homes and screen babies for emotional and developmental problems.



The [Pre-K Act \(HR 3289\)](#) and the [Education Begins at Home Act \(HR 2343\)](#) are two bills geared toward military and families who fall below state poverty lines. The measures are said to be a way to prevent child abuse, close the achievement gap in education between poor and minority infants versus middle-class children and evaluate babies younger than 5 for medical conditions.

'Education Begins at Home Act' – HR 2343

HR 2343 is sponsored by [Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill.](#), and [cosponsored by 55 Democrats and 11 Republicans](#). The Congressional Budget Office estimates that implementing the Education Begins at Home Act would cost taxpayers \$190 million for state home visiting plus "such sums as may be necessary" for in-hospital parent education.

While the bill may appear to be well-intentioned, Pediatrician Karen Effrem told WND government provisions in HR 2343 to evaluate children for developmental problems go too far.

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"The federal definition of developmental screening for special education also includes what they call [socioemotional screening](#), which is mental health screening," Effrem said. "Mental health screening is very subjective no matter what age you do it. Obviously it is incredibly subjective when we are talking about very young children."

While the program may not be mandatory for low-income and military families, there is no wording in the Education Begins at Home Act requiring parental permission for treatment or ongoing care once the family is enrolled – a point that leads some to ask where parental rights end and the government takes over. Also, critics ask how agents of the government plan to acquire private medical and financial records to offer the home visiting program.

(Story continues below)

"There's no consent mentioned in the bill for any kind of screening – medical, health or developmental," Effrem said. "There are privacy concerns because when home visitors come into the home they assess everything about the family: Their financial situation, social situation, parenting practices, everything. All of that is put into a database."

Effrem said it does not specify whether parents are allowed to decline evaluations, drugs or treatment for their children once they are diagnosed with developmental or medical conditions.

"How free is someone who has been tagged as needing this program in the case of home visiting – like a military family or a poor family?" she asked. "How free are they to refuse? Even their refusal will be documented somewhere. There are plenty of instances where families have felt they can't refuse because they would lose benefits, be accused of not being good parents or potentially have their children taken away."

When WND asked Effrem how long state-diagnosed conditions would remain in a child's permanent medical history, she responded:

"Forever. As far as I know, there isn't any statute of limitations. The child's record follows them through school and potentially college, employment and military service."

Effrem said conflicts could also arise when parents do not agree with parenting standards of government home visitors.

"Who decides how cultural tolerance is going to be manifested?" she asked. "There's some blather in the language of the bill about having cultural awareness of the differences in parenting practices, but it seems like that never applies to Christian parents."

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