

Bipartisan Letter to Support Head Start

From: The Honorable Lynn Jenkins

Sent By: baruch.humble@mail.house.gov

Date: 3/6/2017

Dear Colleague:

Created in 1965, Head Start is the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the United States. This program's impact includes reduction in lifelong health costs, a decrease in future encounters with the child welfare system, reduced crime rates, and better educational achievement. Over 32 million pre-school aged children and their families have directly benefited from Head Start, and our country as a whole is better off because of this program.

In recognition of its importance, we are sending a bipartisan letter to the House Appropriations Committee requesting that Head Start funds be prioritized in the Fiscal Year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation. Over the past six years, Congress has repeatedly made Head Start a bipartisan priority. However, Head Start still only reaches about half of eligible 3-5 year olds and fewer than 10% of Early Head Start eligible infants and toddlers. There is more to be done.

When there is adequate support for Head Start, millions of children, their families, and the future competitiveness of the American workforce will thrive. For every dollar invested in Head Start children and families, the country realizes almost nine dollars in benefits through increased earning, decreased welfare dependence, and reduced reliance on other social programs. The Head Start program is simply too vital to let flounder, and we hope you will join us in urging House Appropriators to include adequate funding for Head Start in FY18.

To sign on to the letter, please contact Baruch Humble in Rep. Lynn Jenkins office at Baruch.Humble@mail.house.gov, or Geoff Browning in Rep. Clark's office at Geoff.Browning@mail.house.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynn Jenkins, CPA (KS-02)

Katherine Clark (MA-05)

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Letter text:

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We are writing to urge you to prioritize funding for Head Start, including implementation of the new streamlined Program Performance Standards called for in the bipartisan 2007 Head Start reauthorization, in the Fiscal Year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Like you, we are keenly aware of the serious constraints on the federal budget generally and on the Labor-HHS bill in particular. We believe that Head Start, which offers education, health and nutrition services to economically disadvantaged children, as well as parenting and employment supports to their parents, is a wise and cost-effective investment in families and local communities. Research has amply demonstrated that high quality early childhood education programs generate a significant return on investment, and that the advantage of Head Start can last a lifetime.

Through educational, health and comprehensive social services to children and families, Head Start promotes healthy development, school readiness, and lifetime success. It does so by tailoring high quality services to each community's local preferences and priorities. But quality comes at a cost. In FY 2018, Head Start programs will strain to pay competitive wages and retain highly qualified staff. Implementation of the new performance standards will further enhance Head Start quality and improve child outcomes if properly resourced. The new performance standards emphasize local flexibility to respond to the needs of families by adding additional program hours and days so parents can work; serving more infants and toddlers; requiring more extensive background checks on Head Start staff; and elevating teacher quality through real-time mentoring and coaching.

Head Start represents our nation's commitment to building strong families and communities, and to breaking the cycle of poverty that prevents too many children from achieving their God-given potential. Head Start graduates score higher on school readiness measures such as verbal achievement, perceptual reasoning, and social competence than their peers who do not attend preschool. For every dollar invested in Head Start children and families, the country realizes almost nine dollars in benefits through increased earning, decreased welfare dependence, and reduced reliance on other social programs.

We respectfully request that the FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies mark maintain or increase the current number of children and families served while supporting progress on implementation of the new performance standards so that Head Start can continue to provide much-needed education, health and economic development services to America's most vulnerable children and families.

Sincerely,

Lynn Jenkins, CPA (KS-02)

Member of Congress

Katherine Clark (MA-05)

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