

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Granger and Ranking Member Cole,

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to request that you continue to prioritize robust funding for Head Start. At a time when there are significant constraints on the federal budget and disagreements on the best use of taxpayer dollars, continuing to support investments in Head Start is a fiscally prudent decision.

The mission of Head Start extends beyond preparing children for kindergarten and grade school. Rather, Head Start centers on empowering families and communities with the knowledge and resources they need to ensure that future generations of Americans are able to succeed not only in their adolescence, but at every stage of life.

The positive impact of Head Start's services is clear. Head Start children make progress in language, literacy, and math, while also demonstrating significant gains in social-emotion and cognitive development. They also are more likely to receive health screenings, immunizations, and develop healthy lifestyle patterns. Additionally, Head Start parents are more likely to increase their own educational levels and devote more time to learning activities with their children, and non-resident fathers spend more days per month with their children.

Research demonstrates that Head Start children are more likely to graduate high school, go to college, and achieve a higher quality of life as adults. They are also less likely to be incarcerated or unemployed. For the federal government, as well as for local communities, this means less money spent on the criminal justice system, welfare, healthcare, foster care, and special education.

None of these immediate and long-term outcomes of Head Start would be possible without its community and family-based structure. Each Head Start and Early Head Start program is led by a local agency that is attuned to the specific needs of the local community to ensure that local needs are met with local solutions—there is no one-size-fits-all approach. By working directly with local community systems to provide high-quality, evidence-based early education for children and families based on their specific needs and preferences, Head Start cuts through unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy. Additionally, by involving the whole family in a child's education and development through an emphasis on parent engagement, Head Start facilitates the strengthening of families and local communities.

At the center of Head Start's effective model is its ability to provide much-needed stability for children and their families impacted by trauma, addiction, community violence or any number of adverse childhood experiences. This ability has been critical as opioids, addiction, and other trauma have gripped our communities and put children in harm's way. While previous increases in Head Start funding have had a visible, positive impact at the local level, the number of children affected by addiction and trauma who require specialized care and attention continues to be on the rise. As a result, Head Start program directors face persistent challenges to retain quality staff with adequate experience and training, and keep pace with rising healthcare, facility, and program management costs. We must continue to support them.

Given the critical role of Head Start in addressing the challenges facing our most vulnerable children, families, and communities, we again urge that the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill continue to prioritize robust funding for the program. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this effort.

Sincerely,









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