

Support Increased Head Start and Early Head Start Funding in FY23

Deadline: Friday, April 22 at COB

[SIGN ON VIA QUILL](#)

Dear Colleague:

Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer high-quality education, health, and nutrition services to children from at-risk backgrounds—those living in poverty, in foster care, or experiencing homelessness—as well as employment and educational support to their parents. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education programs, when coupled with close parent engagement, generate a significant return on investment, and that the advantages of Head Start can last a lifetime.

In recognition of its importance, we are requesting that Head Start funds be prioritized in Fiscal Year 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation at a total discretionary funding level of \$15.4 billion. This increase in funding will support a realistic cost-of-living adjustment, improved workforce compensation, add quality improvement funds (QIF) which can be used to make facility improvements and enhancements to classroom environments, and expand the Tribal Colleges and Universities-Head Start Partnership Program. In addition, this request includes funding for Early Head Start expansion and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

Every dollar invested in Head Start children and families realizes almost nine dollars in benefits through greater academic achievement, increased earning, better health outcomes, and reduced reliance on social programs. As communities across the nation learn more about the lifelong challenges that traumatic experiences pose to children and their families, Head Start has a growing evidence base demonstrating that it can be an integral part of strengthening families. The need to support families from at-risk backgrounds, including through addressing trauma, have only been compounded this past year. The Head Start program is vital to our nation's most at-risk children and families, is foundational to an equitable approach to early education, and deserves our full support.

We hope you will join us in urging House Appropriators to include increased funding for Head Start and Early Head Start in FY23 so programs can continue to be a critical bridge to families and young children. If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Bykerk (Ashley.Bykerk@mail.house.gov) with Congresswoman Clark's office. To sign on, [FILL OUT FORM HERE](#).

Thank you for your consideration.

LETTER TEXT:

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations legislation, we urge you to prioritize funding for Head Start. Specifically, we request at least \$15.4 billion for Head Start in FY 2023, a \$4.4 billion increase over FY 2022 enacted. This increase in funding will support a realistic cost-of-living adjustment, improved workforce compensation, add quality improvement funds (QIF) which can be used to make facility improvements and enhancements to classroom environments, and expand the Tribal Colleges and Universities-Head Start Partnership Program. In addition, this request includes funding for Early Head Start expansion and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

As you know, Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer education, health, and nutrition services to children from at-risk backgrounds—those living in poverty, in foster care, or experiencing homelessness—as well as employment and educational support to their parents. Increased funding for Head Start is a wise, cost-effective investment in families and local communities that ultimately leads to greater prosperity for future generations. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education programs generate a significant return on investment, and that the advantages of Head Start can last a lifetime.

Throughout the course of this pandemic, we have seen a remarkable level of effort from dedicated Head Start staff to maintain quality programming, support in-home and in-person early education, modify classrooms and procedures to create safe learning environments, and provide rigorous sanitation and screening to protect children, workers, and families. Head Start programs have proven to be resilient, and as children and families stabilize and build trajectories toward success, we must invest in Head Start's proven, crisis-tested work.

In FY 2023, Head Start will strain to retain qualified staff as programs struggle to pay competitive wages and match the benefits provided by comparable jobs. Strong outcomes for children and families receiving Head Start services rely on well-qualified staff, and well-qualified staff should be properly compensated. Yet compensation for the early childhood workforce, including Head Start, ranks in the lowest 10 percent of professions, resulting in unprecedented turnover of Head Start staff and threatening the stability and ability of Head Start programs to properly serve a maximum number of children. The FY 2023 request includes a \$596 million cost-of-living-adjustment to help programs keep pace, and \$2.5 billion to improve the compensation of Head Start staff to help attract and retain a well-qualified workforce.

The physical environment of an early education program is also central to providing a safe, clean, and stimulating early education experience that promotes healthy child outcomes. Investing in facilities and supporting high-quality physical environments can reduce exposure to noise pollution, toxins in air and water, and other factors that negatively affect development. In order to ensure that the physical environments of Head Start programs are conducive to providing effective program services to children and families, this request includes \$262 million in quality improvement funding (QIF) which can be invested in facility improvements, enhancements to classroom environments, and strengthening of transportation safety.

Additionally, the percentage of teachers in American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start programs with the access and resources to receive their Bachelor's degree lags significantly behind the overall percentage of Head Start teachers with Bachelor's degrees nationwide. To increase the number of qualified education staff working in AI/AN Head Start and Early Head Start programs, we ask for \$10 million to support Tribal Colleges and University Head Start (TCU-HS) Partnership Programs.

Finally, Early Head Start programs work alongside Head Start programs to provide comprehensive care and support for the unique needs of infants and toddlers as well as pregnant women. Early Head Start programs promote physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of infants and toddlers that prepare these children for continued growth and development and eventual success in school and life. Currently, Early Head Start serves only 11 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. This dynamic prevents a continuum of care for our youngest learners and undermines quality. Recognizing that Early Head Start is an essential and growing component to ensuring that even our youngest learners can access high-quality care, this request includes \$1 billion for Early Head Start expansion and Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships, with grants awarded based on the unique needs of each community and its families.

Congress has addressed the unanticipated costs of COVID-19 for Head Start programs. These efforts have been a welcome reprieve that have been critical to maintaining safe services throughout the pandemic. Nevertheless, perennial issues remain that we look to address. For these reasons, we request that you make these necessary investments as outlined 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,

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress