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—which includes Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal 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,
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress

Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress
Jamaal Bowman  
Member of Congress

Kaiali'i Kahele  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress
Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress

Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress
Jason Crow
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Val Butler Demings  
Member of Congress

Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenes  
Member of Congress
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

Troy Carter
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

Jim Himes
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Cori Bush
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Marie Newman
Member of Congress
Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress

Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress
Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress
Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress