

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Room S-128
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Room S-128
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation, we urge you to prioritize additional funding for Head Start – which also 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 \$4.36 billion increase over FY 2022 enacted and \$3.2 billion above the president’s FY 2023 budget request. This increase in funding will support a realistic cost-of-living adjustment, higher workforce compensation, facility improvements and enhancements, and expansion of 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, Senators Luján and Warnock are proud alumni of Head Start, which for almost 57 years has provided education, health, and nutrition services to the most vulnerable children, as well as employment and educational support to families. As we can attest, the advantages of Head Start last a lifetime. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education programs generate a significant return on investment, increasing children’s educational achievement later on in life and significantly reducing the likelihood of adult poverty.¹

¹ Ludwig, J. and Phillips, D. (2007). The Benefits and Costs of Head Start. *Social Policy Report*, 21 (3:4); Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start. *American*

Throughout the course of this pandemic, we have seen a remarkable level of effort from dedicated Head Start staff to providing and expanding quality programming. In FY 2021, Head Start staff conducted over 4,566,696 home visits, helped over 490,880 children stay up-to-date on early and periodic health screenings, and provided preventative dental care to over 306,414 children. It is essential that we continue to build on this success by making a significant investment in Head Start's workforce, who unlock doors to greater opportunities for children and families across the nation. Head Start also remains a leader in early childhood education because of its well-qualified staff (nearly 95 percent of Head Start teachers had an Associates, Bachelors, or an advanced degree in FY 2021), and these professionals deserve to be properly compensated.

However, Head Start has strained to retain qualified staff as programs struggle to pay competitive wages and benefits. 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. The president's FY 2023 budget request proposes to increase Head Start funding by \$1.2 billion over FY 2022, including a \$505 million increase for cost-of-living-adjustment. However, these investments fall far below what is needed for Head Start pay parity with kindergarten teachers (~\$60,660 a year). We therefore request that \$3.1 billion of the requested \$15.4 billion go directly toward increasing Head Start, Early Head Start, Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start; and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program teacher salaries through both a cost-of-living-adjustment and a significant realignment in staff salaries with public school kindergarten teachers.

A strong workforce also needs to reflect the diversity of its students and have the capacity to provide a culturally responsive education. Unfortunately, the percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start teachers with a Bachelor's degree lags significantly compared to Head Start teachers from all demographic groups. To increase the number of highly qualified AI/AN Head Start teachers, we request \$10 million to support the Tribal Colleges and University Head Start (TCU-HS) Partnership Programs, \$6 million above the president's FY 2023 budget request.

The physical environment of a Head Start program is also central to providing a safe, clean, and stimulating early education experience that maximizes children's outcomes. Investing in facilities can reduce exposure to noise pollution, toxins, and other factors that negatively affect

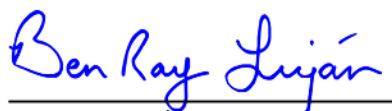
Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 1(3), pp. 111-134; Meier, J. (2003, June 20). Interim Report. Kindergarten Readiness Study: Head Start Success. Preschool Service Department, San Bernardino County, California; Deming, D. (2009, July). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start, p. 112; McCoy, D.C., Yoshikawa, H., Ziol-Guest, K.M., Duncan, H.S., Schindler, H.S., Magnuson, K., Yang, R., Koeppe, A., Shonkoff, J.P. (2017). Impacts of Early Childhood Education on Medium- and Long-Term Educational Outcomes. *Educational Researcher* 46(8), pp. 474-487; Bailey, M.J., Sun, Shuqiao, & Timpe B. (2021). Prep School for Poor Kids: The Long-Run Impacts of Head Start on Human Capital and Economic Self-Sufficiency. *American Economic Review*, 111(12), pp. 3963-4001.

childhood development. Despite the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identifying over \$4.2 billion in deferred maintenance and facility upgrades in 2015, Head Start has received no direct funding to address this accumulating need. In order to ensure that all young children have healthy and safe environments to learn and grow in, we request \$262 million for FY2023 in quality improvement funding (QIF) to enable programs to meet existing needs by providing the flexibility to address specific local priorities with the goal of improving program performance as authorized in the Head Start Act.

Finally, while we can personally speak to the power of Head Start programs, current funding is insufficient to keep pace with demand. Even before the pandemic, Head Start served only 36 percent of eligible three- and four-year-olds and only 11 percent of infants and toddlers. While approximately \$50 billion in annual funding would allow Head Start and Early Head Start to serve all income-eligible families, we request \$1 billion to expand Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, \$50 million above the president's FY 2023 budget request.

Throughout the pandemic, the Head Start and Early Head Start community faced unplanned and unprecedented financial and operational hurdles with the overwhelming costs of COVID-19. Although Congress provided \$2 billion in supplemental funding in FYs 2020 and 2021 to address unanticipated costs, there remain systemic disparities that a \$15.4 billion investment in FY 2023 would significantly address. As Head Start alumni and advocates, we request that you make these robust investments in Head Start so programs can continue to provide much-needed educational and health services to children to give them the best start in life.

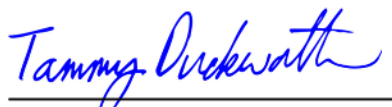
Sincerely,



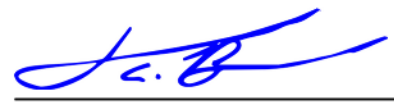
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United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



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United States Senator



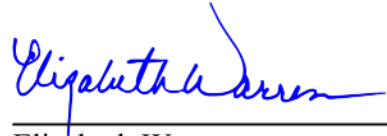
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



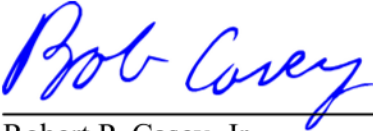
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



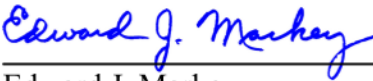
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United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator