



# Head Start Town Hall Attendee Toolkit

Town halls are a great opportunity to engage with your members of Congress and promote what your program is doing on behalf of the children, families, and your community. Above all, town halls are a forum to share the importance of Head Start and Early Head Start and the lifelong impact it has on our nation’s children and families. NHSA is collecting information about upcoming town halls across the country; to find out if one is happening in your area, check out our tracker [here](#).

 **Keep Cool ❄️ Town halls can become heated.** No matter how justified frustrations may be, it is important to remember that you are not only there for yourself, but representing the staff, parents, and children from your program and all of Head Start across the nation.

## Things to Remember When Attending

Tele-Town Hall	In-Person Town Hall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Find out when the next town hall is happening in your home state/town by calling your representative. You can find office phone numbers <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>✓ <b>RSVP ahead of time!</b> You may be required to RSVP by either completing an online form or calling the member's office.</li> <li>✓ <b>Check to see if you can send a question ahead of time.</b> This will help to ensure you get a chance to speak or have your question answered.</li> </ul> <div style="border-left: 1px solid #ccc; padding-left: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p> <b>Tip: Limit yourself to one question.</b> Asking more questions may generate a less thorough response from the member of Congress.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Leave a message.</b> Most tele-town halls give listeners the opportunity to leave a message at the end of the tele-town hall. Use this to your advantage!</li> <li>✓ Let NHSA know if you attended! Email <a href="mailto:advocacy@nhsa.org">advocacy@nhsa.org</a> and let us know how it went.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Find out if there are requirements for attending.</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Arrive early</b> to make sure you have the opportunity to speak up.</li> <li>✓ <b>Wear any Head Start apparel</b> (t-shirts, buttons, hats, etc.) you may have!</li> <li>✓ <b>Speak in a direct and respectful tone.</b> It is important to exemplify why Head Start continues to have bipartisan support despite any disagreements between your member of Congress and other constituents.</li> <li>✓ The main goal of your time speaking should be to <b>leave a positive impression of the work Head Start does in your community.</b></li> <li>✓ Take a picture and share on social media! You can find your member’s social media accounts <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>✓ Let NHSA know if you attended! Email <a href="mailto:advocacy@nhsa.org">advocacy@nhsa.org</a> and let us know how it went.</li> </ul>

## Talking Points for Directors and Staff

- My name is **[your name]** and I am a Head Start **[director/teacher/staff member]** in **[your town]**.
- In **[your town]** we serve **[number]** children and their families. This includes home visiting, in class programs, and supporting pregnant women.
- We promote the academic, social, and emotional development of young children who often don't have other early learning opportunities available to them. We actively involve parents as well, and work with our community partners to ensure the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable in our community.
- Research continues to show that children are leaving Head Start ready to be successful in school and throughout their lives.
- Head Start is a promise Congress and every President, Republican and Democrat, has made to our nation's most vulnerable children and their families to help them prepare to succeed in school and in life since 1965.
- A cut in funding to Head Start and Early Head Start programs by **\$750 million**, approved by the House Appropriations Subcommittee, along with the impact of inflation, would have a devastating impact—cutting services to **roughly 80,000 children and their families across the country**.

- While the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a bill that would **increase Head Start funding by \$275 million**, that bill also leaves room for improvement.
- The Senate bill would provide a **2.3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)**, but with **inflation** still at **3.0%** the Head Start workforce would actually lose ground even with this COLA.
- At a bare minimum, Head Start needs—and our staff deserve—a **full COLA in line with inflation**.
- We need Congress to **#FulfillThePromise** to America's youngest learners and their families.

### Sample Questions

- What are you doing in Congress to support Head Start's children and families?
- What conversations are you hearing in Congress about Head Start?
- What else can we do to improve our collaboration with your office?
- **FOR TOWN HALLS THROUGH THE END OF 2023:** Can Head Start children and families in **{your town}** count on your support in Congress for the funding necessary to serve the maximum number of children and pay staff a living wage?

## Early Head Start Talking Points for Directors and Staff

Here are a few ways you can highlight the impact and need for more funding for Early Head Start. For additional messages, facts, and figures on Early Head Start, please see NHTA's [Early Head Start Advocacy Toolkit](#).

- My name is **[your name]** and I am an Early Head Start **[director/teacher/staff member]** in **[your town]**.
- Early Head Start is the extension of Head Start's child and family services and supports pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. The Early Head Start program has been around nationally for over 25 years and has strong bipartisan support in Congress.
- In **[your town]** we serve **[number]** children and their families in our Early Head Start program through home visits, center-based programs, and pregnancy services.

- We have found that Early Head Start is critical because it reaches children when their brains are most rapidly developing, in infancy, and before age three.
- Our Early Head Start services are critical to get our youngest children the health services, like dental care and immunizations, child development, and early detection of disabilities, they need to thrive.
- Early Head Start also provides support to parents when they are most stressed emotionally and financially. Early Head Start not only provides parenting support, it offers free diapers, formula, and access to job training and employment services.
- A cut in funding to Head Start and Early Head Start programs by **\$750 million**, approved by the House Appropriations Subcommittee, along with the impact of inflation, would have a devastating impact—cutting services to **roughly 80,000 children and their families across the country**.
- While the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a bill that would **increase Head Start funding by \$275 million**, that bill also leaves room for improvement.
- The Senate bill would provide a **2.3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)**, but with **inflation** still at **3.0%** the Head Start workforce would actually lose ground even with this COLA.
- At a bare minimum, Head Start needs—and our staff deserve—a **full COLA in line with inflation**.
- We need Congress to **#FulfillThePromise** to America’s youngest learners and their families.
- I hope you will work with your colleagues in Congress to support additional funding for Early Head Start and the well-trained, but significantly undercompensated, workforce in our programs.

## Talking Points for Parents


- My name is **[your name]** and I am a proud Head Start parent. We live in **[your town]**.
- I came to speak to you today because I want you and Congress to know that Head Start makes a big impact in the lives of families here in **[your town]**.
- My child(ren) receives a high-quality education along with health screenings, testing, and social and emotional support. *Share a story of how your child specifically was supported and how they grew or thrived thanks to involvement with Head Start.*
- As a parent, I gain so much from the program too! I have benefitted from job and career planning and learned how to play an even more meaningful role in my child’s development.
- Head Start has become like a family to me and I hope it can still be there for other families like mine.
- When you go back to Washington, please **#FulfillThePromise** to America’s youngest learners and their families by standing up to funding cuts and investing in Head Start.

### Sample Questions

- What are you doing in Congress to support Head Start’s children and families?
- What are your top priorities for early childhood education and care?

# Early Head Start Talking Points for Parents and Caregivers

- My name is [your name] and I live in [you town].
- I am a proud Early Head Start parent of an infant/toddler. My child(ren) receives child development services, health services, and other care at Early Head Start.
- I came to speak to you today because I want you and Congress to know that Early Head Start makes a big impact in the lives of families with young children here in [your town].
- My child, [name], who is now [age] years old, started when he/she/they was/were [age] months/years old.
- Early Head Start helped us by providing a safe place for my child to learn and access health care and healthy food. *Share a story of how your child specifically was supported and how they grew or thrived thanks to involvement with Early Head Start.*
- Raising an infant/toddler is expensive and I was grateful the program provided free diapers and was completely cost-free. I could not afford a private child care program, so it gave us support we desperately needed.
- I also appreciated all the parenting classes and connections to community support provided by Early Head Start. Infants and toddlers don't come with a playbook, so it was incredibly valuable to be connected with experts and other parents who could support me as a parent.
- I am really grateful that Early Head Start exists and hope we can count on your support to expand access to more children, since access is so limited due to a lack of funds.
- When you go back to Washington, please **#FulfillThePromise** to America's youngest learners and their families by standing up to funding cuts and investing in Early Head Start.

 **Tip:** Share a story about how your child or you have advanced or been impacted positively by Head Start.

## Example of a great story from a parent in Ohio:

“At Warren County Community Services’ Early Head Start program, my daughter not only had care from people who understand how to work with children who’ve experienced trauma, but she was among peers, which was amazing, because it helped skyrocket her development,” said DeJionette Norton. “Her speech improved, her social skills improved, she became more friendly and less aggressive.” Read the full story [here](#).

**Remember, if the Member of Congress asks you a question and you’re unsure how to respond, don’t hesitate to say:**

*“I’m not sure, but I am happy to find out and follow up with you. Who on your staff should I contact?”*

If you need help finding an answer, email: [advocacy@nhsa.org](mailto:advocacy@nhsa.org).