



October 15, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader Schumer:

Speaking on behalf of the approximately 750,000 children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs in every state and Congressional District across the country, now is the time to end the federal government shutdown and fully restore deprived funding.

Presently, six October 1 Head Start grant recipients in three states, serving over 6,500 children and their families, are operating without federal funding, relying on reserve accounts, emergency loans, deferred maintenance, and delayed payments to vendors to stay afloat and keep their doors open. That number will grow on November 1 to an alarming 134 grant recipients in 41 states and Puerto Rico, serving nearly 59,000 children and their families. **As a result, the prospect of Head Start programs across the country closing their doors, furloughing staff, and – most importantly – ceasing to provide critical services to children and families will dramatically increase.**

Disruptions to Head Start services would have a devastating impact on children and families who rely on them. This includes families with low incomes, children in foster care or experiencing homelessness, children with disabilities, children of agricultural workers, and American Indian and Alaska Native children—many of whom live in small or rural communities with no other early education or child care options.

Consistency and stability are essential to healthy child development. Head Start closures or interruptions would upend fragile family and financial systems, cutting off access to nutritious meals, physical and mental health checkups, and other vital supports. Reliable care is also crucial for the thousands of parents who depend on Head Start while they work.

Therefore, we urge you to work together to immediately end the shutdown and eliminate the threat of Head Start closures.

Regardless of when the shutdown is resolved, Head Start's ability to support these children and families is already in a state of crisis due to the rising cost of goods and services to programs directly, but also to the Head Start workforce of credentialed teachers, certified kitchen and transportation staff, and professionally

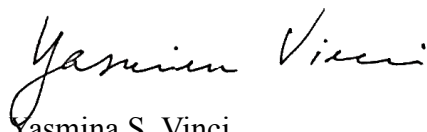
trained counselors, many with advanced degrees. With that in mind, we also urge you to complete the FY26 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill with haste and with the inclusion of a necessary cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

Because the FY25 appropriations process did not provide a COLA, Head Start programs have been operating with flat funding since the beginning of FY24, which translates to an actual decrease of over five percent when accounting for inflation. While some in Washington, D.C., argue that flat funding is a “win” in this environment, this isn’t a “win” for programs already stretched to the brink on resources and families near the end of their rope when classrooms must be closed for lack of available staffing.

Please help us stop these crises by ending the shutdown, restoring October funding gaps, and passing an FY26 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill that includes a reasonable COLA for Head Start.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Yasmina S. Vinci
Executive Director
National Head Start Association



Andrea Pesina
President
National Indian Head Start
Directors Association



Cleo Rodríguez, Jr.
Executive Director
National Migrant and Seasonal
Head Start Association

cc: All Members, U.S. House of Representatives
All Members, U.S. Senate