



PENNSYLVANIA HEAD START ASSOCIATION

PARENTS, STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS AND FRIENDS AFFILIATED FOR CHILDREN

Barbara Mahaney – Board President

Blair Hyatt - Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Proposed Funding Cuts to Head Start Would Not Help Address Budget Deficit Research Shows Head Start Programs Reduce Demand for Services Investing More in Head Start Will Reduce Budget Deficit

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania – Blair Hyatt, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Head Start Association (PHSA), expressed concern that the recently released (February 11, 2011) House Bill (H.R. 1) wrongly assumes that cutting Head Start program funding is an effective method for addressing the federal budget deficit.

“The proposed cuts would reduce Head Start funding by almost 20%. If these cuts are enacted to Head Start, in Pennsylvania an estimated **1000** staff members will lose their jobs and **7,000** children and their families will be dropped from Head Start’s critical education, health, and support service programs,” said Blair Hyatt, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Head Start Association. “The impacts of these cuts would take a devastating toll on communities across Pennsylvania, resulting in more kindergarteners unprepared for school, higher special education costs and increased economic insecurity for not only our most vulnerable families but all of the citizens of Pennsylvania. If we don’t stabilize and invest in the communities that need it most, the future of our economy will remain less competitive and less innovative – which means fewer jobs for everyone.”

Investing in early childhood education generates a 7% to 10% return on investment each year, according to Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman. “Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy – even during a budget crisis.”

Head Start is a common sense investment for the United States because of its proven return on investment: For every \$1 invested in Head Start, our nation receives \$7 back in increased earnings, employment, family stability, and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education. Further, access to affordable care ensures that more at-risk parents and families can stay in the workplace.

Says Mr. Hyatt, “We are grateful for the strong support Head Start receives from Pennsylvania’s US Representatives and Senators. Head Start programs need them now, more than ever, to fight with us for our funding. It is the right thing to do for families, Pennsylvania and our struggling economy.”

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Head Start

Started by President Johnson and saved by President Reagan, Head Start embodies a non-partisan national commitment to ensure opportunity for every American. During a time of economic hardship, policymakers should do everything in their power to nurture job security and growth and to prepare a capable workforce for the changing economy. Head Start and Early Head Start programs strive to prepare future generations to rise to the challenge of keeping America at the forefront of innovation and ingenuity amongst rising global competition. Head Start programs across the country provide critical early education, health, nutrition, child care, parent involvement, and family support services to millions of at-risk children and families.

Success Story

There are countless personal stories about Head Start's ability to pave the way to success. Anthony Williams from Erie, Pennsylvania exemplifies how Head Start changed the direction of his family's journey:

"Head Start has been an important part of my life since I was young. My mother was a Head Start teacher in the South Bronx and both of my children have gone through the program. They are both very successful students today.

My personal growth with Head Start really took off when I joined the Policy Council. I went on to chair the council for two years, during which time I became more involved in other aspects of my community.

The most important thing I learned from Head Start is that if you allow the program to work for you, it truly makes you a better person. I am now employed as a data specialist for my Head Start program and it gave me the opportunity to help others as I was helped."

National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Reform Report

We see a similar situation with Head Start and Early Head Start, both of which are often unfairly judged and maligned. Yes, we can and should do a better job in those programs, but the focus on the so-called "drop-off" in elementary years is based solely on cognitive achievement, which data shows is less than half of the equation for success. It also overlooks the fact that many Head Start children move from a nurturing early education environment into low quality elementary schools. Gains made in early childhood education must be sustained with quality education. Yet, throughout the course of their education and lives, Head Start graduates tend to be more persistent in their education, more inclined to healthy behaviors and less inclined to be involved in criminal activity. Early Head Start and Head Start are programs on which to build and improve—not to cut.

James J. Heckman
Department of Economics
The University of Chicago