



March 28, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Shelby, and Ranking Member Lowey:

We, the undersigned representatives of Head Start communities across the country, write today to express our gratitude for your longstanding support for Head Start and Early Head Start. As you begin to make decisions regarding Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) Appropriations, we respectfully urge you to continue this support by allocating \$8,868,389,000 for Head Start and Early Head Start.

Following the enactment of Omnibus Appropriations legislation on January 17th, 2014, Head Start and Early Head Start directors remain grateful to each of you for your leadership. We are grateful that the bill not only restored the damaging cuts from sequestration, but also recognized the importance of supporting ongoing quality improvement by including additional funds to retain qualified staff, cope with the increased costs of program operation, continue implementing the Designation Renewal System, as well as a expand investments in one of our most at-risk and underserved populations—low income infants and toddlers.

Within the total amount of funding for FY15 funding, we urge the Committee to continue, and build on these investments. In particular, we propose \$8,243,389,000 in base funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, a \$50 million increase over the President's level. We propose that this slight increase be dedicated to workforce quality improvements. It is well known that one of the hallmarks of excellence in any early learning program is the caliber of its workforce. Head Start teachers are required to possess Bachelor's degrees in early learning or related fields, which enables the program to have one of the best-trained workforces in the country. However, the average salary for these degreed teachers is \$30,086 - lower than what many schools pay teachers, and much lower than many other jobs with comparable education requirements. Therefore, we suggest that a more significant investment than the President's request of \$100 million, \$150 million, be made to support workforce quality improvements and help offset the continued rise in energy, transportation, and other fixed costs related to operating a Head Start program.

We also fully support expanded access to Early Head Start, which today is only able to serve a scant 4% of eligible infants and toddlers. Continued research into early brain science tells us that these first two years of life represent a critical window in development, and damage done by remaining in toxic, stressful environments has been clearly linked to poor health and education outcomes. The achievement gap is present as early as 18 months. Early Head Start centers are among the highest quality environments for children of this age, and the comprehensive nature of

the program ensures both a stimulating intervention for children as well as education and support for parents.

We propose that the Committee fund not only continued investments in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships at \$500 million, which will begin in earnest this year, but also allocate \$100 million to fund expansion of the Birth to Five pilot programs that seek to better link Early Head Start and Head Start grants in communities. In supporting the latter, the funds should be utilized to assist Head Start grantees add Early Head Start slots and convert existing Head Start slots for 3-4 year olds to Early Head Start slots, both with the goal of ensuring that there is an Early Head Start slot to complement a Head Start slot. We also suggest that the Administration utilize a portion of the funds to create a process that enables current grantees that hold both types of grants to streamline the administrative burden and combine these two grants into one.

Finally, we continue to support the Administration's efforts to identify low-performing Head Start and Early Head Start programs. While the process is not without its problems, we believe in the overall goal to improve quality through competition. Therefore, we support the Administration's proposed \$25,000,000 for the Designation Renewal Transition fund, which will help new Head Start grantees as they quickly ramp up to serve their new communities.

President Obama also proposed an additional \$800 million to support Early Head Start expansion through partnerships and expansion of high-quality Head Start programs. We are appreciative of the attention paid to the need to serve the large population of underserved, at-risk infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, but understand that new investments that exceed this year's budget caps are unlikely.

We thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued support. We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,

National Head Start Association

New England Head Start Association
Region VII Head Start Association
Region IX Head Start Association
Region X Head Start Association

California Head Start Association
Connecticut Head Start Association
Maine Head Start Association
Massachusetts Head Start Association
Minnesota Head Start Association
Mississippi Head Start Association
Missouri Head Start Association
Montana Head Start Association
Nebraska Head Start Association
New Hampshire Head Start Association
New Jersey Head Start Association

New York Head Start Association
Ohio Head Start Association
Pennsylvania Head Start Association
Rhode Island Head Start Association
South Dakota Head Start Association
Vermont Head Start Association
Washington Head Start Association
West Virginia Head Start Association