



Head Start Townhall Toolkit

Townhalls are a great opportunity to remind your member of Congress of the work you and your program are doing on behalf of the children and families in your community in most need of a Head Start.

With the contentious political climate in our nation's capital, townhalls can often devolve into an outlet for constituents to engage in heated rhetoric toward their members of Congress. Recent events regarding healthcare have made these occurrences even more prevalent. However, no matter how justified the frustrations are, it is important to remember that you are not only representing the staff, parents, and children from your program, but Head Start communities across the nation.

Townhalls should be treated as an opportunity to have a constructive, honest discussion about how to improve your communities. As a Head Start leader, you can attest to the importance of investing in early childhood education and development, as well as the all-encompassing, lifelong impact it provides for our nation's most vulnerable children and families, and our communities as a whole!

Logistics and General Advice

- Arrive early to make sure you have the opportunity to speak up.
- Wear any Head Start apparel that you have, such as buttons, shirts, etc.
- Speak in a professional and direct tone. It is important that you exemplify why Head Start continues to have such bipartisan support, even if there are intense disagreements between your member of Congress and other constituents.
- **The main goal of your time speaking should be to invite your member of Congress to come visit your program**, especially if they are home for a significant amount of time.

Talking Points for Directors and staff

- My name is [**your name**] and I am a [**director/teacher/staff member**] of Head Start in [**Your Town/city, State**].
- In [**your community**] we serve ____ children and their families every year. This includes home visiting, in class programs and even pregnant women.
- Not only are we meeting the high bar of Head Start quality requirements, but we are involving parents in the program and working with our community partners to

locally design our program so it has the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our community.

- Our children are leaving the program ready for success in school and throughout their lives.
- I truly hope you, (name of Member of Congress), will come visit our program and see the impact for yourself.

Talking Points for Parents

- My name is [**your name**] and I am a proud Head Start parent. We live in [**Your Town/city, State**]
- I came to speak to you today because I want the Sen/Rep to know that Head Start makes a big impact for the families of [**your town**]
- My child receives a quality education along with health screenings, testing and social and emotional support that **he/she would** most likely would not have had access to until kindergarten.
- As a parent, I gain so much from the program too! From planning family goals, professional development and being taught how to play an even more meaningful role in my child's development, Head Start is like a family.
- **[Share a story about how your child or you have advanced or been impacted positively by Head Start]** ex. When we found Head Start my son/daughter was... (where your child was educationally or socially/emotionally) and now he/she is exceeding our wildest dreams by...(explain where they are today)
- We need more Head Start, not less.
- Please come visit our program!

Also, feel free to mention that you voted for them, if you indeed did.