

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger,

Thank you for your recent inclusion of \$10.8 billion for Head Start programs in the FY2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill. Head Start is an essential lifeline that supports the nutritional, educational, and developmental needs of our most vulnerable children and families. The coronavirus public health emergency has created extraordinary challenges for Head Start providers and burdened them with new costs that threaten their ability to continue to serve families in need. The budgetary strain created by the pandemic requires Congress to act urgently to address funding shortfalls and ensure children do not go without critical services. Therefore, as Congress considers additional COVID-19 related relief measures, we urge you to include \$1.7 billion in flexible supplemental funding to support Head Start programs and the families that rely on them.

For over 55 years, Head Start has delivered high-quality, science-based early childhood education and family support services to poverty-stricken families and children across the country. Head Start offers educational instruction, routine health and wellness check-ups, and whole-person care to children. Its multigenerational approach assists parents with advancing their education, obtaining important life skills, and fostering their children's success. More than 750,000 working parents depend on the high-quality, safe settings provided by Head Start programs to care for their children while they are at work. In addition, over one million children received educational and health services from Head Start providers last year alone.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Head Start programs adapted to ensure children's preparation for kindergarten while meeting families' basic needs of nutrition and housing. Innovative Head Start programs organized food and diaper drives, provided online parent training and virtual learning, delivered educational materials to homes, and performed weekly check-ins with families to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of children. With summer upon us, a select number of programs are providing supplemental summer sessions to ensure four- and five-year-olds are prepared for elementary school, and all programs are gearing up for an unprecedented 2020-2021 school year that will include new social distancing and group size requirements, transportation modifications, amplified facility cleaning standards, revamped

health and wellness policies, virtual learning programs, extensive home-based educational materials, and expanded mental health outreach and care.

Restarting and reconfiguring these locally constructed and managed programs are imperative to ensuring the educational readiness, health, and safety of children. Because of the massive reforms needed to adapt to the realities of COVID-19, Head Start programs anticipate a roughly 20% operational cost increase that will amount to \$1.7 billion in additional expenses in calendar year 2020 alone. These expenses encompass facility and equipment modifications; additional staffing, PPE supplies, more frequent janitorial services; mental health support, training, and delivery; and technology upgrades to expand the accessibility of virtual learning. While costly, these changes are critical to give working families confidence that their children can safely return to Head Start classrooms and will ensure that families do not lose access to the important support provided by Head Start.

As Congress considers additional coronavirus-related relief measures, we therefore strongly urge you to prioritize \$1.7 billion in flexible supplemental funding for Head Start programs. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Christine Godinez in the office of Rep. Dina Titus (christine.godinez@mail.house.gov) or Elizabeth White in the office of Rep. John Katko (elizabeth.white@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
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