



Head Start
CALIFORNIA
CONNECTING | ENGAGING | ADVOCATING
for our highest needs children

February 4, 2019

The Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assembly Member Ting:

Head Start California welcomes the legislature's commitment to greater access, quality and coherence in California's early care and education system because it demonstrates the value you place on *investing in children and families*. This value resonates deeply in the Head Start community. We applaud the focus on the state's low-income families and the recognition that more support for at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers is an essential strategy to combat child poverty, *which is precisely the mission of Head Start*.

Head Start promotes school readiness for children in low-income families by offering educational, nutritional, health, social, and other services. The standards for our programs are evidenced-based and show both long and short term benefits. For decades, Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) have played a critical role in California's early childhood care and education mixed-delivery system. In 2017, according to the National Head Start Association, HS/EHS served over 100,000 of California's most *vulnerable children from infancy through age 5*. Eligibility for HS/EHS is based on federal poverty thresholds. For a single parent with one child, that's just \$16,240 annually- *only 25%* of the income needed to cover basic living expenses in California. While 1 in 6 of California's children were in poverty in 2017, it's estimated that only 7-8% of eligible children younger than age 3 had access to Early Head Start, both nationally and within California.

Head Start agencies currently bring \$1 billion a year in federal funds to California. With additional state support, Head Start agencies have potential to expand federal support to serve more children and families as part of California's comprehensive early care and education system. As the state strengthens access and quality in our early childhood programs, Head Start and Early Head Start agencies ensure more children and families receive vital services.

Head Start California respectfully requests that California invest in HS/EHS, as twelve other states have done. Investing in the capacity of Head Start programs can help HS/EHS grantees continue to maximize the one billion federal dollars that help employ over 24,000 people statewide. These investments would help HS/EHS:

- Reach out to serve more eligible families.
- Renovate / create facilities to serve more infants and toddlers – where a large service gap exists.
- Attract and retain qualified staff who, are underpaid.

California's Head Start community looks forward to partnering with the legislature to address the inter-generational cycles of poverty and ensure more children receive high quality early childhood experiences.

Page 1 of 2

With the world's 5th largest economy on the planet, California can afford to invest deeply in all aspects of the ECE mixed-delivery system, so that we can put more kids, families and communities on their path to success.

Thank you for your consideration. For more information on these issues, please contact Christopher Maricle, Executive Director, Head Start California at 916.444.7760 x105 or chris@headstartca.org.

Sincerely,

Stacey Scarborough

Stacey Scarborough
President, Head Start California

Copy: Hon. Richard Pan, Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
Hon. Richard Roth, Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education
Hon. Joaquin Arambula, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
Hon. Kevin McCarty, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance
Hon. David Chiu, Chair, Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus
Hon. Lorena Gonzalez, Chair, Legislative Latino Caucus
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Hon. Scott Wiener, Chair, Legislative LGBT Caucus