



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

February 2, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Head Start California welcomes the bold vision you put forward in your 2019-2020 Budget because it clearly demonstrates that your administration embraces the value of *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 at-risk children by offering educational, nutritional, health, social, and other services to children and their families. 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 administration 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:chris@headstartca.org).

Sincerely,

*Stacey Scarborough*

Stacey Scarborough  
President, Head Start California

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