



February 25, 2022

The Honorable John Laird
 Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
 Subcommittee 1 on Education
 1020 N Street, Room 502
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
 Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
 Subcommittee 3 on Health and Human Services
 1020 N Street, Room 502
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Request Proposal to support Head Start educator salaries

Dear Senators Laird and Eggman:

We, the undersigned, write on behalf of nearly 150 Head Start grantees in California, serving approximately 100,000 children and their families annually and employing over 25,000 teachers and staff statewide. Head Start programs in California operate over 1,700 sites across the state and serve the most at-risk children and families with a program that offers early learning, health, and wraparound services. We respectfully request support for a \$50 million appropriation in the 2022-23 budget to support teacher salaries, ensuring these local programs can continue to serve children in Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian Head Start.

Head Start programs are federally funded at the same rate across the nation, which poses challenges in a high-cost state such as California. Salaries for Head Start teachers are deeply inequitable compared to their TK-12 colleagues. In California, the typical Head Start teacher with a bachelor's degree makes only \$41,000, compared to a \$66,000 salary for a kindergarten teacher – a \$25,000 difference.¹ As a result of inadequate salaries, positions can go unfilled for months, forcing programs to close classrooms - leaving families with no childcare and without access to needed resources, including medical and dental care, parenting classes, employment support and connections to housing and nutrition services. In 2021,

¹ National Head Start Association. (2019). *2019 California Head Start Profile*.
<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20402535-2019-for-2018>

recognizing the crisis in early learning salaries, the Legislature provided for increases to the state-subsidized reimbursement rate. However, this increase will not benefit Head Start teachers and threatens to further increase the discrepancy between Head Start and their other early learning colleagues.

Without additional funding that equals the support provided to local educational agencies and other segments of the mixed-delivery system, Head Start programs will face serious challenges maintaining their vital whole-child, whole-family services to some of California’s most vulnerable children, including homeless families, migrant families, and families in deep poverty. Without a dramatic investment in the capacity of Head Start programs to attract and retain staff, California risks significant reduction in the \$1.3 billion annual federal investment.

Other state systems have centered Head Start in their early learning system expansions. Oregon provides nearly \$200 million a year in state support to expand access to Head Start through its Oregon PreK program. This allocation is equivalent to more than \$1 billion in California, based on the proportion of funded Head Start slots in each state. Massachusetts and Alaska both provide state funding to invest directly in maintaining competitive teacher salaries and benefits. The federal Build Back Better preschool proposal, if implemented, will require states to maximize Head Start enrollment and base their preschool program quality guidelines on the Head Start Program Performance Standards. An investment in Head Start now will allow California to be prepared to swiftly leverage federal early learning investments in the future.

For these reasons, we request your strong consideration and inclusion of an ongoing \$50 million appropriation in the 2022-23 January Budget to invest in the capacity of Head Start programs to recruit and retain high-quality staff.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact our Governmental Affairs Director, Anna Ioakimedes at anna@headstartca.org for additional information.

Sincerely,



Christopher Maricle
Executive Director
Head Start California

Partner Organizations in Support

American Heart Association
Build Up California
California Dental Association
California Federation of Teachers
Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP)
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Children Now

Head Start Grantees in Support

Child 360
Children’s Institute
Child Care Resource Center
Child Development Resources of Ventura County
Child Start
Community Action Partnership of Madera County
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County

Children's Defense Fund
Council for a Strong America
ECE Budget Coalition
Fight Crime Invest in Kids
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
Ready Nation
Region 9 Head Start Association
Unite LA
United Ways of California

Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County
E Center
Encompass Community Services
Foundation for Early Childhood Education
IZZIE Early Education
Kai Ming
Kidango
Kidz Community
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee (MAAC)
Neighborhood House Association
Northern California Child Development, Inc.
Orange County Head Start
Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE)
Para los Niños
Sierra Cascade Family Opportunities
Wu Yee Children's Services
YMCA of the East Bay-Early Childhood Impact

CC:

Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Jim Nielsen
Senator Dave Min
Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh
Senator Melissa Melendez
Senator Richard Pan
Elisa Wynne