March 3, 2022

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| The Honorable Nancy Skinner  Chair, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review  1020 N Street, Room 502  Sacramento, CA 95814 | The Honorable Phil Ting  Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget  1021 O Street, Room 8230  Sacramento, CA 95814 |

**RE: Budget Request Proposal to support Head Start educator salaries**

Dear Senator Skinner and Assemblymember Ting:

YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME respectfully requests your support for a $50 million appropriation in the 2022-23 budget to support Head Start 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 serve 100,000 of the most at-risk children and families in California with a program that offers early learning, health, and wraparound services

OPTIONAL PARAGRAPH – WHY YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORTS HEAD START OR HOW HEAD START BENEFITS THE COMMUNITIES YOU SERVE

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]](#footnote-2) 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, 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 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.

Sincerely,

NAME  
TITLE

**CC:**

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| Senator John Laird  Senator Dave Min  Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh  Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman  Senator Melissa Melendez  Senator Richard Pan  Senator Jim Nielsen  Elisa Wynne  Renita Polk | Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula  Assemblymember Devon Mathis  Assemblymember Jim Patterson  Assemblymember James Ramos  Assemblymember Blanca Rubio  Assemblymember Jim Wood  Assemblymember Vince Fong  Assemblymember Steven Choi  Assemblymember Alex Lee  Assemblymember Jose Medina  Assemblymember Patrick O’Donnell  Assemblymember Marie Waldron  Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes  Erin Gable  Nicole Vazquez |

1. National Head Start Association. (2019). *2019 California Head Start Profile*. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20402535-2019-for-2018> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)