

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

Since 1965, Head Start has prepared more than 20 million of America's most vulnerable children for success in kindergarten and later life. We appreciate your continued support of Head Start over the years. Yet, for the past five years Head Start funding has remained stagnant, falling far behind the rising costs that many programs are facing. As you craft the FY2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to include at least \$750 million in additional funding for Head Start to maintain these quality programs. Our request does not attempt to address the unmet need in Head Start, but would restore the recent cuts and provide a cost of living increase for FY2008.

For more than 40 years, Head Start has provided America's neediest children with cognitive, social-emotional, and academic skills, helping to make them ready to learn when they get to school. Studies show that at-risk children who have experienced Head Start programs are better prepared for school than their peers who have not had the benefit of Head Start.

Head Start serves only about half of all eligible preschool children and fewer than five percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Today, there is a growing need for more – not fewer – Head Start services. As funding for other social services programs has been cut, low-income families depend even more on the comprehensive health and nutrition and early education services Head Start and Early Head Start provide.

With increased facility rents, insurance coverage, transportation costs, skyrocketing heating and cooling costs, and the need to recruit higher-qualified teachers, many Head Start programs are in crisis. The funding provided in recent years means that fewer children are being enrolled, waitlists are growing, program days and school years are being condensed, staff cutbacks are commonplace, and transportation is being reduced or eliminated. We need to invest in our children, not short-change them. Undeniably, Head Start is a vital part of that investment.

In order to maintain enrollment, quality service levels, and to provide for a much needed cost of living increase for Head Start programs for the coming year, we again request at least \$750 million to be added to FY2007 levels in the FY2008 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill. We thank you for your serious consideration of this request and support for this vital program.



Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Norm Coleman
United States Senator

Ed Hennessey

Olympia Snowe

Robert A. Menendez

Rick Warren

Jeff Miller

George V. Voinovich

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Susan M. Collins

Barack

Ch. Schumer

Barack Sanders

Dick Durbin

Sh. Brown

Jay Rockefeller

Jon Kyl

Bill Nelson

Patrick Leahy

Ken Salazar

Jon F. Kerry

Bob Casey, Jr.

Ernie Beyer

Carl Levin

Max Baucus

Ben Cardin

Kenn Feingold

Amy Klobuchar

Dianne Feinstein

Th. Wy

Blanche R. Linde

Maria Carbone

Byron T. Dwyer

Chuck Schumer

Daniel J. Akaka

Debbie Stabenow

Paul D. Ryan
