

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

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March 5, 2024

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Chairman Aderholt:

We write to express our concerns with the current funding level allocated to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in Colorado and request the Committee on Appropriations include sufficient funding for these programs in the FY24 House Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill.

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs are central to early childhood care models, serving nearly 12,000 children in Colorado. Head Start and Early Head Start have proven and lasting impacts, offering education, health, and nutrition services to children from at-risk backgrounds, as well as employment and educational support to their parents. While we speak on behalf of the impact on Coloradans, it's vital to recognize that states across the country are equally concerned for the 40 million children and their families who depend on these vital programs.

Unfortunately, the integrity of these programs is at risk. Through the FY24 LHHS bill, the House has proposed \$750 million in sweeping cuts to Head Start and Early Head Start funding, amounting to a 6.25 percent reduction. However, after accounting for inflation, the reduction amounts to approximately 9.65 percent.<sup>1</sup> This cut will have serious consequences. Specifically, the FY24 funding levels will prevent roughly 80,000 children and their families from accessing Head Start and Early Head Start's high-quality and life-changing services. For Colorado, this means that nearly 1,100 children could lose access to critical Head Start and Early Head Start services.<sup>2</sup> Colorado's Head Start and Early Head Start programs are already limited by funding, as services reach only 10-12 percent of the eligible children in any given year. The proposed funding cuts would mean even fewer eligible children can be served by these programs. According to the KIDS COUNT in Colorado! 2022 data, there are approximately 45,000

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<sup>1</sup> [Impact of FY24 House LHHS Subcommittee Mark on Head Start and Early Head Start with Inflation | National Head Start Association](#)

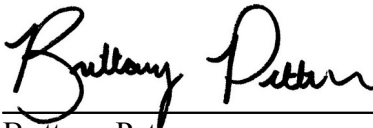
<sup>2</sup> [FY24 House Funding Level will Deprive a Generation of American Children the Opportunity to Succeed in School and in Life | National Head Start Association](#)

Colorado children under the age of five who live in poverty or deep poverty who are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services.<sup>3</sup>

Our workforce will also feel the strain of the proposed funding cuts. Head Start and Early Head Start services rely on well-qualified, well-trained, and experienced staff – and these professionals should be properly compensated for the vital role they have in our children’s lives. Yet salaries for the early childhood workforce, including Head Start, rank amongst the lowest in terms of pay and benefits of most professions.<sup>4</sup> This has resulted in unprecedented turnover of Head Start staff and threatens the stability and ability of Head Start programs to properly serve a maximum number of children and retain workers. Additionally, understaffing is one of the primary reasons for long waitlists for Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment. With salaries already at challenging levels, proposed funding reductions would exacerbate workforce shortages, as qualified and credentialed professionals who staff these programs could be forced to leave the field.

While we continue our work to pass the FY24 spending bill, we urge you to keep our concerns at the forefront of your consideration. Maintaining viable, consistent, and realistic funding at levels that will service projected enrollment and our Head Start and Early Head Start workforce is vital. At a minimum, the FY24 appropriation for Head Start and Early Head Start should be increased by \$372 million over FY23 in order to provide a cost of living adjustment in line with inflation. Additionally, please also keep the well-being of the children and families who depend on Head Start and Early Head Start in mind as you work through the FY25 budget.

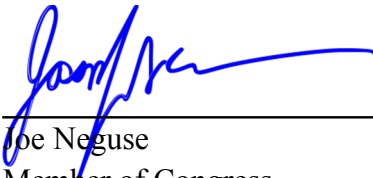
Sincerely,



Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



Yadira Caraveo, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Jason Crow  
Member of Congress

<sup>3</sup> [2022 Kids Count | Colorado Children's Campaign](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Hard Work Is Not Enough, Women in Low-Paid Jobs | National Women's Law Center](#)

*Diana DeGette*

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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress