

July 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-221 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

Amidst the challenges of COVID-19, the 46 undersigned organizations urge your support of \$1.7 billion in supplemental funding to provide Head Start with the necessary resources to maintain high-quality program delivery in communities across our country. COVID-19 has disrupted nearly every aspect of American life—schools, jobs, religious activities, health visits, sports and recreation, just to name a few. For families struggling to make ends meet, toiling away to finish a degree, or searching for stable work, COVID-19 has been an emotional and economic blow, bringing with it a daunting response and recovery process. Fortunately, in all of our communities and especially during this pandemic, Head Start and Early Head Start programs have stepped up to ensure nearly one million children are receiving basic care, new mothers are buttressed against this storm, early learning is advanced, and families living on the edge are surrounded with support.

The at-risk children and families served by Head Start have been deeply impacted by this crisis, and in response, local programs across the country quickly pivoted to provide critical stabilizing services. Murray Head Start in Mayfield, Kentucky shared that staff have been assisting families with food services and working to meet other basic needs while maintaining their focus on children's educational needs. With disparate access to technology, the program has worked to reach families through calls, texts, emails, and video calling. Community Parents, Inc. in Brooklyn, New York shared that they responded to COVID-19 closures with daily mindfulness support for staff, remote learning across multiple platforms for children, and additional summer school readiness services and teletherapy for children with special needs. This month, families are stopping by Community Parents, Inc. to visit with teachers, and more than 100 children who are heading to kindergarten this fall are receiving embellished backpacks full of learning materials, activities, and face masks. The fact is, every Head Start program across the country remained in contact with children and families, and programs continue to adapt to meet the needs of children and families in the face of ever-changing circumstances, creatively delivering programming, supporting recovery from shortfalls in basic needs, and keeping the commitment to kindergarten preparedness.

Multigenerational stability, emotional and physical security, and whole-person care are the underpinnings on which Head Start programs support more than one million children annually.

This proven work continues even now, but to ensure the economic future of these families and enable working parents to return to jobs with peace of mind surrounding the well-being of their children, Head Start needs to fully function. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates in-classroom learning, particularly for young children, is critical to child development, and these in-person experiences depend on additional resources to be provided safely.

Conservatively, Head Start programs nationwide need \$1.7 billion in 2020 to address a myriad of new challenges wrought by COVID-19, according to survey data from the National Head Start Association. Among the very real and unanticipated needs are disposable PPE and increased janitorial services, facility modifications, additional staffing and operational models, distance learning and virtual classroom software and services, staff technology, and strengthened mental health support. Because of Head Start's unique federal-to-local model, Head Start programs have been able to continue services to children and families, confronting unavoidable costs in doing so; now, aid to Head Start programs stands to have an immediate impact, going directly to communities that are hurting the most.

Due to COVID-19 and the higher operating cost of simply maintaining services to Head Start children and families, the 46 undersigned organizations seek to ensure that answering those needs does not come at the cost of quality or slots. As a coalition, we stand together, asking for your help in filling this financial void. For more than 55 years, Head Start has proven to be a sound investment of federal resources. It has identified and addressed life-altering health and learning challenges; enabled moms and dads to find gainful employment and complete college degrees; provided a continuous sanctuary for foster children; and brought stability to communities and families across the country. Please stand with us in meeting this need as you look to address wholly unanticipated COVID-19 related expenses.

Sincerely,

National Head Start Association  
National Indian Head Start Directors Association  
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association  
SchoolHouse Connection  
National Women's Law Center  
Child Welfare League of America  
RESULTS  
First Five Years Fund  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Prevent Blindness  
Jumpstart  
Council for Professional Recognition  
Parents as Teachers  
National Organization for Women  
The Ounce of Prevention Fund

Every Child Matters  
National Senior Corps Association  
MomsRising / MamásConPoder  
Save the Children Action Network  
YMCA of the USA  
National Indian Child Care Association  
Kaplan Early Learning Company  
New America, Early & Elementary Education Policy  
Acelero Learning  
Shine Early Learning  
Child Care Aware® of America  
ZERO TO THREE  
National WIC Association  
Prevent Child Abuse America  
Healthy Families America  
Primrose Schools  
Teaching Strategies  
Bright Horizons  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
National Community Action Partnership  
Children's Defense Fund  
United Way Worldwide  
National Children's Facilities Network  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)  
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)  
National Association of Counties (NACo)  
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)  
The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR)  
Educare Learning Network

CC: The Honorable Steven Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Republican Leader