



For Immediate Release
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Florida Families Warn of Economic and Educational Crisis if Head Start Faces Federal Cuts
Nearly 45,000 Florida Children and Thousands of Jobs at Risk if Program is Eliminated

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. –Communities across Florida are sounding the alarm over potential budget cuts that threaten and dismantle Head Start, a program that has empowered families, educated young children, and fueled local economies for nearly six decades.

Since 1965, the federal initiative of creating a Head Start program has equipped generations with the tools to break the cycle of poverty, build self-reliance, and strengthen the workforce—values treasured by Americans everywhere. Now, proposed federal cuts put its future, and the futures of thousands of Floridians, in jeopardy.

In Florida, the numbers tell a powerful story:

- **\$544.9 million** in federal Head Start funding was supported in Florida in FY 2024.^[1]
- **45,020 children** and **41,587 families** received transformative services to end the cycle of poverty.^[2]
- **11,670 Floridians** were employed across **860 centers** in **63 counties** through Head Start and Early Head Start. ^[2]
- Research shows that for each dollar invested in Head Start, there is a return on investment of **\$7-\$9 in economic gain**.^[3]

“If it weren’t for the Head Start program, my children wouldn’t be who they are today, nor would I.” These voices of transformation – from parents, alumni and educators – can be heard at www.FLHeadStart.org, where real stories reveal how Head Start strengthens families, supports careers, and sets a foundation for lifelong success.

Beyond academics, Head Start offers:

- Vital health services, including medical, dental, vision, hearing screenings, and enrollment and support for children with disabilities
- Nutritious meals and wellness education
- Family engagement and parenting support to build stronger homes

The threat of eliminating Head Start would have devastating ripple effects – particularly in rural Florida, where childcare access is already limited. It would strain employers, limit workforce participation, and remove a crucial economic engine from many communities.

“At a time when we need solutions to workforce shortages, early education access, and economic disparities, cutting Head Start would be a step backward,” said Wanda Minick, FHSA Executive Director.

Now more than ever, Floridians are urged to contact their congressional representatives and advocate for the protection of Head Start. The proposed elimination of the federal Head Start program could have devastating effects on working families in Florida, resulting in a projected \$688 million cost to replace the childcare services it provides. This figure is nearly double Florida's current state-funded Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten budget. Without Head Start, families face significant challenges accessing childcare, as existing School Readiness waitlists create unnecessary obstacles despite their eligibility. Such a move could create significant financial strain on the state and disrupt early childhood education, health, and nutrition services for thousands of families. Advocates warn that the consequences would extend far beyond economic impacts, threatening family stability and the developmental growth of children who rely on these essential programs.

This is a pivotal moment to protect what works – for families, for the workforce, and for the values we share as Americans. “Because when we invest in Head Start, we invest in the promise of every child and the future of our great state,” says Dr. Maite Riestra-Quintero, FHSA President.

Source:^[1] <https://headstart.gov/program-data/article/head-start-investments-state>, ^[2] Office of Head Start - Program Information Report ^[3] Ludwig, J. and Phillips, D. (2007). The Benefits and Costs of Head Start. Social Policy Report. 21 (3: 4); Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start. American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, Meier, J. (2003). Interim Report. Kindergarten Readiness Study: Head Start Success. Preschool Service Department, San Bernardino County, California; Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start

About FHSA

The Florida Head Start Association (FHSA) is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to strengthening Head Start and Early Head Start programs across the state. Representing more than 45,000 children and families in Florida, FHSA champions access to high-quality. Head Start, a key player in the early childhood education landscape, providing critical services, including school readiness, comprehensive health support, and family support. Guided by the Head Start Program Performance Standards, FHSA empowers members to advocate, lead, and enhance the education, health, and social services provided to families by Head Start. For more information, please visit www.flheadstart.org.

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