

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you out of serious concern about the future of the Head Start program. As you know, Head Start is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs ever created. It has helped millions of children prepare for school, become productive students and improve their lives.

However, you have proposed dramatic changes to Head Start that we believe will seriously erode the effectiveness of the program. We believe that providing funding in block grant form will actually result in less money for Head Start. At a time when the States are facing record deficits, governors may use the funding intended for Head Start to help alleviate the strains on their budgets. We encourage you to keep the funding formula in its current form.

Despite the program's success over the past several years, Head Start has not received the funding it is warranted. As you may be aware, the latest U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Monitoring Report found that 85 percent of Head Start programs were of high quality; and another study, the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), revealed that Head Start graduates enter kindergarten "ready to learn." These studies show the effectiveness of the program. We believe that many more children should be enrolled in Head Start so that they may benefit from this outstanding program. However, this year's budget only provides for an increase of \$148 million or two percent. This is barely enough to keep pace with inflation and certainly not enough to enroll additional children. We support the maximum funding possible.

In addition, removing jurisdiction of Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services and placing it under the Department of Education will fundamentally undermine the core philosophy of Head Start. Since its inception, Head Start was designed to help the "whole" child. Literacy and numeracy are important aspects of Head Start, but equally important are the health screenings and nutrition training that families receive. Also, a key to the success of Head Start is involving parents in their children's education. By placing the program in the Department of Education, these services can not be carried out as effectively as they currently are.

The United States is in an unprecedented moment in its history. But as we address these events, we should not turn our back on our most vulnerable citizens. Providing a sound education should always remain a top priority to the United States. Head Start is a key component of this priority and we should remain dedicated to it. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Marine Waters

Bonnie G. Rayson

Corine Grown

Chaka Fattah

Bobby Scott

Melvin L. Watt

Ed

Stephane Pitts Jones

Danny K. Davis

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