



LULAC Head Start Inc.

DEVELOPING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY FOR LIFE

 [LULACHeadStart.org](https://www.LULACHeadStart.org)

 **(203) 836-5850**

March 12, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee,

My name is Mikyle Byrd-Vaughn. I am the Executive Director of LULAC Head Start Inc., a childcare agency that serves 320 children ages 8 weeks to 5 years old in New Haven and East Haven, and the co-chair of the Connecticut Head Start Association which includes all programs that receive Federal Head Start funds in the state of Connecticut. Collectively, we provide Early Head Start and Head Start services for in almost every school district in the state.

On behalf of the Connecticut Head Start Association and all the children and families we proudly serve, I am writing in support of continuing State Head Start funding. This essential funding allows our programs to do the following:

- Provide 648 children and families with free childcare services, including a majority of whom are of African American and Hispanic descent
- Extend the day from 6 to 10 hours of free care to allow working families to have more hours for employment and job training
- Offer summer programming for children up to 5 years old in developmentally appropriate environments
- Give young children a rich learning environment that includes innovative and research-based learning tools to support school readiness in social-emotional, STEM, cognitive and motor development domains, including supports for family engagement, bridging learning from the classroom to home
- Provide employment for childcare professionals across the state

We know a child's brain is 90% developed by age five, making the early childhood years one of the best opportunities to shape a child's future. That's why all Head Start programs believe all children should have access to high quality early care and education. We fight to break the cycle of poverty by providing children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their social-emotional, health, and nutritional needs and support the families in improving their lives.

The following programs and number of children would be impacted by this loss to funding:

- LULAC Head Start Inc. (New Haven and East Haven); 174 children
- TEAM Inc. (Lower Naugatuck, Milford and Waterbury); 80 children
- Early Childhood Learning Center (East Hartford School District); 36 children
- EASTCONN (Hampton); 17 children

- EdAdvance (Litchfield); 42 children
- Manchester School District (Manchester); 17 children
- Alliance for Community Empowerment (Bridgeport); 146 children
- TVCCA (Jesuit City); 46 children
- CREC (Hartford); 90 children

Early Head Start and Head Start is a federal to local program that provides child-development and family-centered services for income eligible families. This funding allows for up to 6 free hours of childcare for the children and families. This two-generational program focuses on the well-being of the child, as well as building a relationship with the family. Children benefit from the nurturing and learning provided in a year-round, high-quality program, while parents are connected to services that enable them to pursue goals such as going back to school and getting a job.

Starting early is a proven way to help children be successful in school and life and is a big part of our state's strategy to make sure all children, no matter the obstacles, are ready for college and career.

Through the layering of State Head Start funding, our programs help transform opportunities for low-income families with infants and toddlers that face the greatest barriers to accessing the supports and services they need to thrive.

Without the State Head Start funding, our programs would be forced to reduce the number of children we serve by more than 75%. In addition, families would not be able to maintain employment or participation in essential job training opportunities due to the reduction in hours and loss of childcare in the summer months. More than 300 children would lose their slot in our programs at time when childcare and the economy are attempting to stabilize during the global pandemic. At a time when Connecticut faces a shortage of at least 50,000 licensed childcare slots for infants and toddlers, we cannot afford to exacerbate this crisis by destabilizing the current supply of high-quality care provided through our program.

I urge you to support the State head Start funding and continue to help Connecticut families thrive.

Sincerely,

Mikyle Byrd-Vaughn, MS, MBA, EdM
Executive Director
LULAC Head Start Inc.
mikyleb@lulacheadstart.org
203-836-4705

Co-Chair
Connecticut Head Start Association