

Greetings Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the Health & Human Services Committee:

I am writing to strongly support continued state investment in Head Start (HS) for 6 reasons.

1. HS provides a unique service along with and beyond the array of school-based and private childcare options, which also benefit from state funding.
2. This includes extensive support to family resources and relationships within which children can thrive, including HS assistance with addressing housing, nutrition, parental mental health and substance misuse issues, employment, etc.
3. This occurs within a community network of services, agencies, pediatricians, dentists, etc. directly collaborating with HS.
4. HS can support children from mother's pregnancy, through home-based service and then center-based service, into the transition to kindergarten.
5. HS plays a proactive role in serving families and preventing exclusion, e.g. due to behavior.
6. Federal support for HS is at risk to end, as it is on a list of programs which could be interpreted as sunseting without further Congressional authorization<sup>i</sup>; its funding was temporarily shut down 1/28/25 so that the Trump Administration could evaluate whether it complied with federal policies<sup>ii</sup>, including any related to HS strengths in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for kids<sup>iii</sup>; and its termination is recommended by the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 report<sup>iv</sup>. I would be glad to elaborate about these federal issues separately.

I offer this from my perspective as a psychologist providing contracted HS early childhood mental health consultation; supporting parents, staff, community services and the children they all serve; across forty years from Aroostook to Kennebec counties.

Among the various early education service options, controlled experimental studies (e.g. Head Start Impact Study HSIS<sup>v</sup>) found that center-based programs show stronger short-term cognitive gains compared to parent or family-caregiver models. The longer-term value of outcomes from a variety of child and family HS services should also be considered.

Strengthening family protective factors<sup>vi</sup> supports resilience to negative Social Determinants of Health<sup>vii</sup> and transgenerational trauma<sup>viii</sup>. Of the 2,631 children in 2418 families served by HS in Maine in the 2023-24 year, 11% were in foster care, 10% experienced homelessness, and 22% had special needs served by Individual Education or Family Service Plans. Nearly every family received at least one family service, 63% received a research-based parenting curriculum, and 48% received emergency/crisis intervention services. HS also supported parent employment, vocational education, mental health services, substance misuse services, etc.<sup>ix</sup>--services which aren't typically available in the family or non-family caregiver voucher alternatives to HS advocated by the Heritage Foundation.

Head Start remains an exceptional investment, which engages children, parents, communities, and professionals; striving to continue and sustain program improvement. As the federal government may move to cut expenses and pass them back to states, Mainers should be prepared to serve their next generation.

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All citations retrieved 1-30-2025

i <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2024/11/16/10-government-programs-that-could-be-defunded-in-name-of-efficiency/76365175007/>

ii <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/omb-q-a-regarding-memorandum-m-25-13/>

iii See data on HS ethnic, racial, and language diversity in the <https://headstart.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/service-snapshot-all-2023-2024.pdf>, recognize that HS serves a variety of income levels, note that HS actively includes parent participation and works with children with behavior problems rather than expelling them, etc; issues beyond the scope of this note.

iv [https://static.project2025.org/2025\\_MandateForLeadership\\_FULLL.pdf](https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULLL.pdf) [p.482; 515 of 922]

v <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/head-start-impact-study-final-report-executive-summary>

vi <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>

vii <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

viii <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35682038/>

ix <https://headstart.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/service-snapshot-all-2023-2024.pdf> Is the national snapshot

For Maine, one needs a specific account available publicly for download, which I could fax or email. e.g.

file:///Users/markrains/Downloads/PirSnapshot.pdf

Mark Rains  
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LD 210

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Mark Rains, PhD.

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[www.infantmentalhealth.org](http://www.infantmentalhealth.org)

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