

November 21, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Andrew Gradison
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Gradison:

I write to you today to urge you to immediately issue Notice of Awards to Head Start programs that had their funding delayed due to the government shutdown. Over 130 programs serving nearly 65,000 children have had to either close their doors or string together other sources of funding in order to keep their doors open without federal funding. It is unacceptable that Head Start programs continue to wait for federal funds now that the government has reopened.

From the very start of the Trump administration, Head Start programs have faced an onslaught of attacks and chaos. On January 27, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget issued a memo that froze the disbursement of grant funding for federal programs and services governmentwide, including Head Start, causing rapid uncertainty for programs. On April 1, HHS abruptly closed five of the ten regional offices that help local grantees administer Head Start programs in 22 states. Furthermore, in July, the Government Accountability Office found that the administration illegally withheld funding from Head Start programs nationwide.

Now, Head Start programs and the families that rely on Head Start across the nation are facing more uncertainty as programs remain closed while available funding has yet to go out the door. The federal government has been open for more than a week, and yet, as of November 20, at least 17 programs in 12 states caring for over 6,600 children are closed. This means parents are needlessly facing the difficult choice of finding expensive alternative care or to not working and earning income for their families.

I urge you to immediately issue awards to ensure all Head Start Programs can fully operate.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies