

# Why Head Start Matters



## Smart Investment, Strong Returns

Head Start serves as a cost-effective, locally administered program that empowers low-income families through early childhood education, health services, and parental support. In 2023, it reached **nearly 800,000 children nationwide**, helping parents stay in the workforce while preparing the next generation for success (NHSA, HeadStart.gov).

Importantly, **Head Start** delivers real value to taxpayers:

Nearly 70% of Head Start families have at least one parent who is employed, in job training, or in school at the time of enrollment, demonstrating the program's role in supporting working families (HeadStart.gov). Many Head Start families are led by single parents (59.56%) who rely on affordable care to stay employed (HeadStart.gov).

These services can reduce future government dependency by improving high school graduation rates, increasing lifetime earnings, and lowering public assistance use. Studies have shown that well-implemented early childhood programs can have significant, sustained impacts on the lives of children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Brookings).





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## Current Challenges Threatening Local Impact

Recent federal actions and proposals are endangering this vital program.

- **Insufficient Budget Increase:** The House Appropriations Committee proposed a 0.2% funding increase for FY2025—well below inflation and rising operational costs— amounting to a real funding cut.
- **Top-Down Consolidation Risks:** Centralizing control undermines the local autonomy that has been key to Head Start's success (Brookings).
- **Family Instability:** Hundreds of thousands of parents who rely on the program are likely to leave the workplace. Meals, developmental screenings, and health care could become compromised and unaffordable (NHSA).



## Liam's Inspiring Journey of Hope

Our family chose Easterseals based on positive reviews and a recommendation from Liam's speech therapist, who believed it would aid his development. We have seen significant improvements in Liam's speech and behavior due to the dedication of his teachers, Ms. Silvia and Ms. Mayra. His time at Easterseals has brought us peace of mind, allowing us to support our family while he enjoys school, builds friendships, and fosters relationships. Supporting Easterseals means supporting children's needs and community integration. In one word, Easterseals is "love."





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## What's at Stake

- **Workforce Disruption:** Without Head Start, working parents—especially single mothers —lose access to childcare, jeopardizing their jobs and weakening the labor market. The U.S. economy already loses \$122 billion each year due to the lack of affordable infant and toddler care (Brookings). Eliminating Head Start would exacerbate this burden.
- **Loss of Local Jobs:** Head Start employs 232,551 Americans, including 56,665 (24.36%) who are current or former Head Start parents. Funding cuts would lead to layoffs, harming local economies (HeadStart.gov).
- **Increased Long-Term Government Spending:** Head Start's early education services are linked to lower incarceration rates, higher employment, and greater tax contributions over a lifetime. Defunding now will cost more later. (Brookings)

## Defending Disability

Head Start is the largest provider of early education for children with disabilities:

- **84,166 children (15.14%)** have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- **33,045 children (14.03%)** have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

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By law, at least 10% of Head Start students must be children with disabilities—a benchmark not met by other early childhood programs, which often lack the training or capacity to serve this population (HeadStart.gov).

## A Proven, Accountable Program Worth Preserving

Head Start succeeds by combining local control, parent involvement, and evidence-based outcomes. It lifts up families, builds local economies, and safeguards taxpayer investments. To preserve this momentum, we urge policymakers to:

- **Secure Sustainable Funding:** Ensure funding increases reflect operational costs and inflation.
- **Maintain Local Leadership:** Oppose policies that centralize control and dismantle high-performing local programs.
- **Support the Workforce of Today and Tomorrow:** Prioritize programs that help parents work now and prepare children for future jobs.

Preserving Head Start is not just compassionate—**it's common sense.**

**Meaningful Change. Independence. Full Lives. That's Our Impact. In Thousands of Communities Across America.**