

REGION VII HEAD START ASSOCIATION



The Region VII Head Start Association promotes and supports the effectiveness of Head Start Associations and members to ensure quality services for children and families.

Board of Directors

Korey Hensley
President

Kay Mitchell
Vice President

Mary Dusek
Treasurer

Suzan Obermiller
Secretary

Bonnie Calvert

Kellie Cervene

Jim Chisham

Kristen Donze

Keri Griswold

Darlene Kleist

Steph Knust

Karen Marsh

Fawn Rader

Debbie Quirarte

Sherry Soard

Glenda White

March 7, 2007

To: Congressman George Miller, Chair
Congressman Howard McKeon, Senior Republican Member
Workforce & Education Committee, 110th Congress

From: Korey Hensley, President, Region VII Head Start Association
Donna Veatch, Executive Director, Region VII Head Start Association

Re: **Head Start Reauthorization: Comments on Draft House Legislation**

The Region VII Head Start Association (R7HSA), representing 38,419 children and 90 grantee and delegate agencies across the four-state region of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, would like to recognize the work and commitment of the committee regarding the recently released Draft House Language regarding Head Start Reauthorization.

R7HSA is encouraged to read several areas in the draft legislation that will serve to strengthen the future direction of Head Start.

- Suspension and termination of the National Reporting System
- Clarifying and expanding the definition of deficiency
- Expanding the federal monitoring system to include a focus on strengths as well as areas of improvement
- Increasing the quality set aside to 60%
- Expanding Early Head Start by increasing the set-aside and conversion of slots
- Recognizing the importance of the role of parents and shared governance

The Region VII Head Start Association does however have concerns regarding the language in several areas of the House Discussion Draft. First and foremost, as with any Head Start reauthorization effort, R7HSA feels committed to always include the following statements in any work done regarding Head Start Reauthorization:

“Every effort to maintain the integrity of the federal to local structure of Head Start must remain intact and reauthorization language should be clear and supportive of that structure. Any attempt to strengthen the position of Head Start within the state system should include safeguards to ensure federal funding is not sub planted or subject to use at the discretion of the state. Equally as important as retaining the federal to local structure of the program is the issue of appropriating funding at a level that ensures a quality driven program that will continue to serve the nation’s most vulnerable children.”

The Region VII Board of Directors would like to focus on the following items cited as areas of concern as related to House Draft document.

- **Eligibility:** We urge you to consider increasing eligibility to 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Each Head Start grantee has safeguards built into their selection procedures to ensure that those with the most need are served first. By increasing the eligibility percentage, Head Start programs would be able to serve more children of the working poor.

Donna Veatch, Executive Director

R7HSA ▪ 122 Teton Ridge Drive, Lake Winnebago, MO 64034 ▪ www.r7hsa.com

Phone: 816-537-7801 ▪ Fax: 816-537-7802 ▪ R7HSA@comcast.net

- Teacher Degree Requirement: RVIHSA does support the goal of 50% of Head Start teachers to receive their B.A. degree by 2013. However, we strongly feel the language regarding this issue should be considered a goal and not mandated. Currently there are no funds identified to assist in this effort which creates a continued hardship on programs in recruiting and maintaining qualified staff. This issue is especially true of the most rural areas across the nation which lack colleges and universities offering early childhood degree programs. Adequate and appropriate funding to meet such a mandate is critical.
- Enrollment: The proposed bill keeps the 100 percent of enrollment, as opposed to the 95 percent threshold outlined in the Senate bill and advocated for by the Head Start community. Although Head Start programs must be held accountable, the standard of 100% is unreasonable and too stringent. We urge you to reconsider lowering this requirement which could become in the long term detrimental to Head Start programs.
- Local Collaborations with State Pre-K: Head Start programs have a long commitment of collaborating with other child care agencies, local education agencies, and State-funded preschool programs; however, mandating that these collaborations occur can be detrimental. Consider adding language that allows Head Start agencies to document attempts at formal collaborations, and when collaboration is not possible that it not negatively impact a Head Start program.
- Early Learning Councils: We do not agree with the inclusion of the Early Learning Councils as an element of Head Start reauthorization. It is not appropriate to burden already limited Head Start appropriations for the task of funding Early Learning Councils. We also request that with the establishment of Early Learning Councils, language be included to support a seat for State Head Start Collaboration staff and the State Head Start Associations.
- Composition of Governing Board: The Requirement that one member of the Governing Board must be a licensed attorney could cause a potential hardship for many programs especially programs located in very remote rural areas

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft Head Start Reauthorization bill. We also recognize and respect the responsibility you have as decision makers to ensure that the very best decisions are made regarding serving the early childhood community.

Sincerely,



Korey Hensley
President, Region VII Head Start Association



Donna Veatch
Executive Director, Region VII Head Start Association