



**WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION OF HEAD START AND ECEAP (WSA) URGES
CONGRESS TO SUPPORT AMERICAN RECOVERY AND INVESTMENT ACT;
DELIGHTED TO SEE NEW FUNDING FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS**

Kent, Washington// February 12, 2009// Head Start officials in the state of Washington are awaiting the passage of the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009. The American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009 includes an increase of \$1 billion for Head Start and \$1 billion for Early Head Start programs nationally. With new funding programs across the country will be able to serve up to 100,000 new low income infants and children (several hundred in WA), create 60,000 new jobs, and continue to help parents become self-sufficient.

Cathy Garland, WSA President and a director with the Children's Home Society, stated the following:

"We are excited that Congress included in the recovery package a \$2 billion increase for Head Start and Early Head Start. If the final bill passes we look forward to the opportunity to serve more children from birth to age 3 through our Early Head Start program.

The research is clear that children are born learning. We now know that a child's brain is like a sponge and can soak up a tremendous amount of information at the earliest ages—even earlier than previously thought just a few years ago. If we can provide children with high quality early learning experiences before the age of 3 those children have a better chance of school success. This is even more critical for low income children and children who have experienced trauma as a result of homelessness or other at risk factors.

Early Head Start programs in WA only receive enough funding to serve 3 out of every 100 eligible children because of a lack of funding. With new funding we will hopefully be able to provide services to several hundred more low income infants and toddlers in our state. I strongly urge Congress to pass this important piece of legislation."

Joel Ryan, Executive Director of WSA, said the following:

"We are grateful that the final package includes an increase in Head Start and Early Head Start funding. With some many families across our state hurting and in need of high quality early childhood education we believe this new infusion of funding couldn't come at a more critical time. We are hopeful that Congress will support the final bill and stand up for children and families."

Sandy Nelson, Executive Director of Early Childhood programs at ESD 113 in Olympia and a board member of the Association, said the following:

"This funding will make a significant difference in the three county areas of Mason, Grays Harbor and Thurston. The ESD 113 Sound to Harbor Head Start and ECEAP

program serves 761 low-income preschool children. With a wait list of over 400 preschool children, the opportunity to open new classrooms will meet a community need and generate new jobs. Across the state, the increase in Head Start funding for the current year will provide cost of living increases that have been missing for two years, and will be used to expand and increase services.

The Sound to Harbor Head Start program does not have Early Head Start funding. The opportunity to apply competitively for this funding will meet an unmet need for services to low-income families with children ages birth to 3 years. The estimated number of eligible children exceeds 2,000.

Inclusion of Head Start and Early Head Start funding in this bill will result in new services to the neediest families in our communities, and new jobs, as well as new expenditures for the operation of the program – a true economic stimulus.”

ABOUT HEAD START

Created in 1965, Head Start is the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the United States. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Nearly 25 million pre-school aged children have benefited from Head Start nationwide. In WA more than 19,000 children and their families received Head Start services.

ABOUT EARLY HEAD START

Early Head Start (EHS) provides child development services to low-income pregnant women and families with young children under age three. Begun in 1994 as an extension of Head Start, the program promotes healthy prenatal outcomes; the health, cognitive and language development and socio-emotional well-being of infants and toddlers; and family development and a supportive parent-child relationship. Local EHS agencies offer services in centers and through home visits, with some programs combining both center-based and home-based approaches.

THE RESULTS

Children that receive a Head Start experience are more likely to be ready for school, more likely to graduate from high school, and less likely to need remedial services or to be involved in crime. Economists now believe that for every dollar taxpayers invest in Head Start they receive a return on their investment of at least \$7. Early Head Start has similar positive results for children. Please find a complete listing of the positive research on Head Start and Early Head Start attached to this news release.

ABOUT WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP (WSA) is a statewide organization composed of representatives from Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Native American Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for our state's sister program ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com

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