

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations, we respectfully request \$14.27 billion for Head Start.¹ Head Start is our nation's flagship early learning program, supporting healthy child development and serving as a lifeline for the most vulnerable children and families in our country. This investment will provide a cost-of-living adjustment (our primary request for FY27), allow programs to address critical local priorities, increase access to fresh and nutritious food, and expand recruitment and development of staff for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) programs. In addition, investments would address the demonstrated need for expansion of Early Head Start and facility improvements through separate competitive grant programs administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS).

Head Start served nearly 700,000 children and their families across every congressional district in FY26. In that time, Head Start programs conducted over 3.5 million home visits, helped over 673,000 children stay up-to-date on diagnostic treatments, ensured that over 566,000 children received preventative dental care, and involved more than 201,000 fathers in their children's education.

Investing in Head Start is fiscally responsible. Economic research has shown that high-quality early childhood programs, like Head Start, generate an annual return on investment of more than 13%.² Children who attend Head Start are more likely to have healthy eating patterns, complete high school, enroll in and graduate from college, and be gainfully employed. They are also less likely to experience poor health, be arrested or incarcerated, continue to live in poverty, or need public assistance as adults.

Our funding request would help programs maintain the level of quality needed to benefit Head Start children, families, staff, and the communities they serve, through the following:

- A cost-of living adjustment (COLA) of 4.97% (\$615 million) for Head Start in FY27. While inflation since the beginning of FY24 has reached 5.57% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Calculator,³ Head Start has received a COLA of just 0.6%. Providing a COLA for Head Start is our top priority, as programs are struggling with hiring and retaining quality staff, impacting both the quality of service and continuity of care.
- \$537 million in Quality Improvement Funds (QIF) for FY27 to help local Head Start programs address barriers to full enrollment, maximize capacity, and deliver lasting impact for the children

¹ Head Start includes all of the following: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs.

² "[Quantifying The Life-Cycle Benefits Of A Prototypical Early Childhood Program](#)," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 23479, June 2017.

³ https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

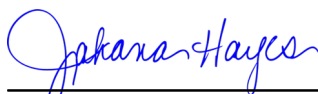
and families in each community they serve. QIF allows Head Start programs to address critical local needs, identified in partnership with OHS.

- \$206 million in FY27 funding for programs to access fresh and nutritious food beyond Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funding. For many children, Head Start meals are often the only real meals they receive. However, CACFP funds are often insufficient and programs must look for additional funding to make sure participating children can access nutritious and healthy food.
- \$13 million in FY27 to expand the Tribal Colleges and Universities–Head Start Partnership Program and increase the percentage of teachers in AI/AN communities receiving bachelor’s degrees. The Tribal Colleges and Universities–Head Start Partnership Program is critical to expanding the number of staff culturally and linguistically suited to address the growing need for Head Start services in AI/AN communities.
- \$200 million in FY27 funding for a competitive grant program to be administered by OHS to expand Early Head Start. Many fully staffed, fully enrolled Early Head Start programs have lengthy waitlists and are looking to expand. Fewer than 15% of programs that applied for expansion funds in 2024 received funding, demonstrating a significant need to expand the program.
- \$339 million in FY27 funding for a competitive grant program to be administered by OHS to repair, renovate, rebuild, or replace Head Start facilities. Many aging Head Start facilities require additional federal investment for high-quality repairs and improvements. A FY15 OHS report projected that need at over \$3.8 billion, and inflation has greatly increased that number.

For decades, Congress has united around Head Start to provide high-quality early learning and support for underserved children and their families throughout our country. FY27 represents an opportunity to reinvigorate this vital federal-to-local partnership. Congress must continue to invest in and allow Head Start to continue putting children and families on the path to success in school, in work, and in life.

As you evaluate FY27 funding requests, we strongly and respectfully urge the Subcommittee to prioritize \$14.27 billion for Head Start. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jahana Hayes

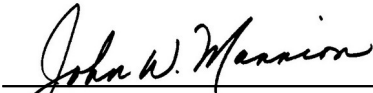
Member of Congress



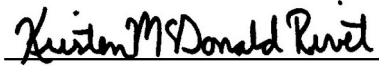
Dina Titus
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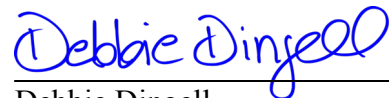
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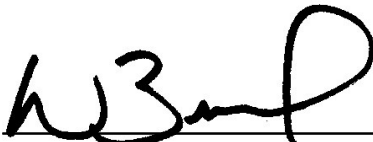
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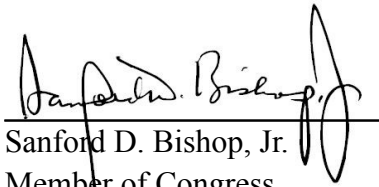
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Wesley Bell
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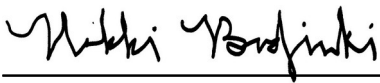
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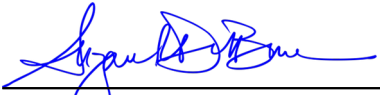
Lateefah Simon
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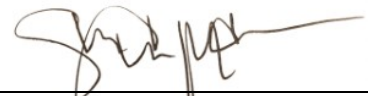
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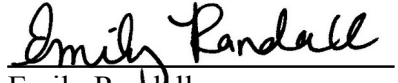
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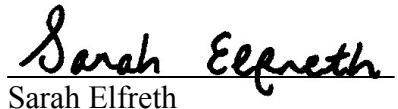
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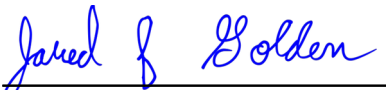
Nellie Pou
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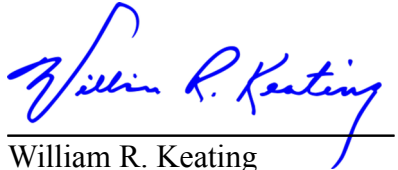
Joe Courtney
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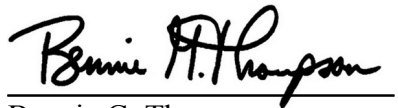
Jared Golden
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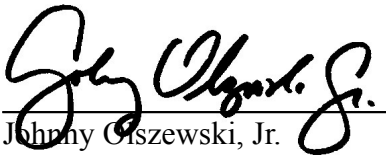
William R. Keating
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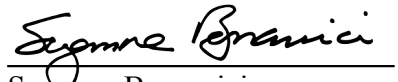
Gwen S. Moore
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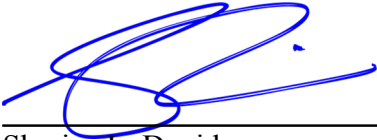
Bennie G. Thompson
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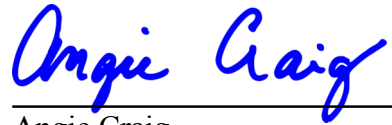
Johnny Oisewski, Jr.
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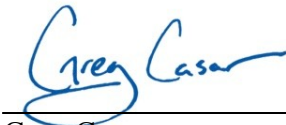
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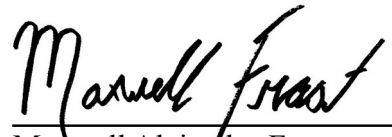
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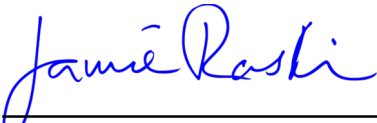
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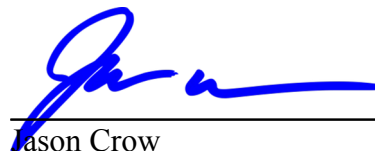
Rick Larsen
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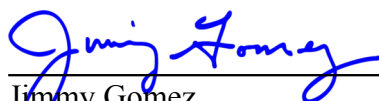
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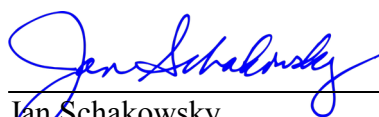
Jason Crow
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Jimmy Gomez
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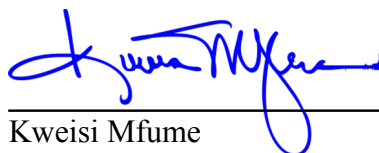
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Kweisi Mfume
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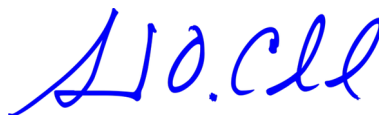
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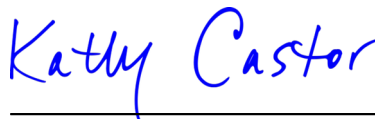
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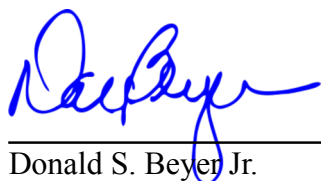
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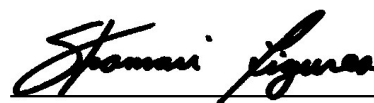
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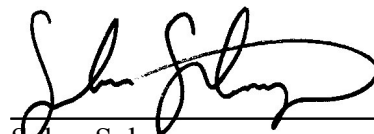
David Scott
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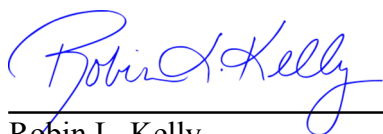
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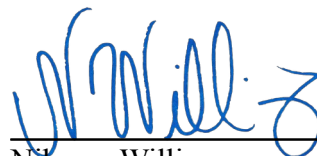
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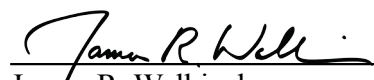
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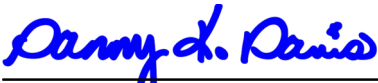
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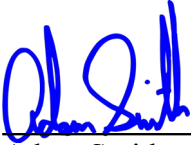
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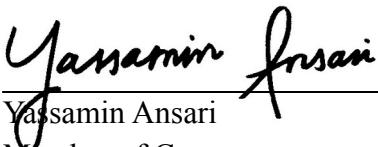
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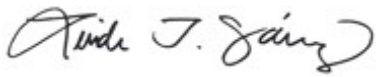
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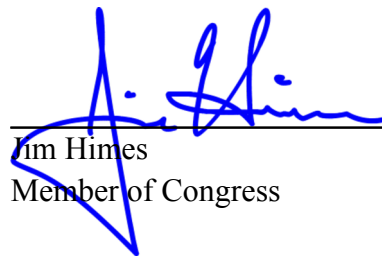
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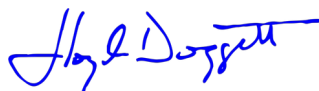
Joaquin Castro
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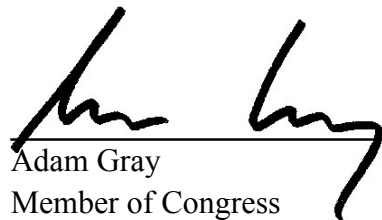
Julia Brownley
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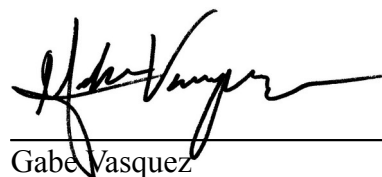
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Adam Gray
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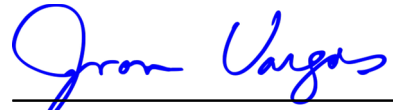
Gabe Amo
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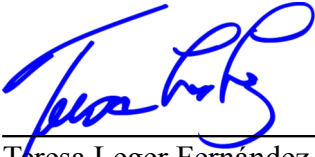
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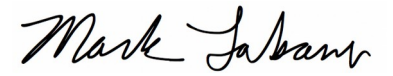
Eric Sorensen
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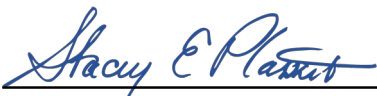
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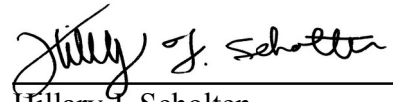
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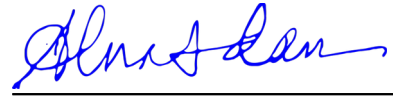
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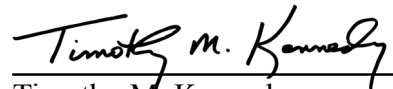
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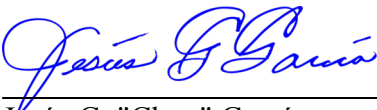
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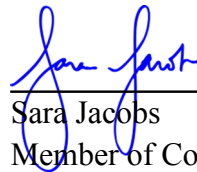
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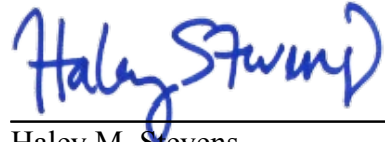
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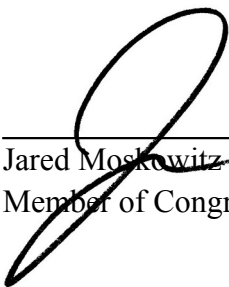
Jim Costa
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Deborah K. Ross
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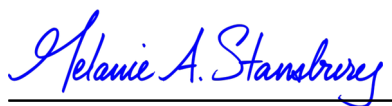
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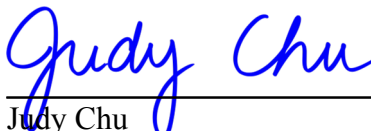
Eugene Simon Vindman
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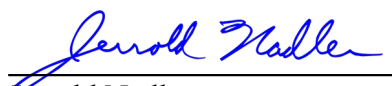
Al Green
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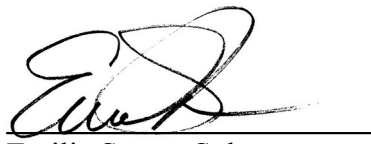
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
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Judy Chu
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Jerrold Nadler
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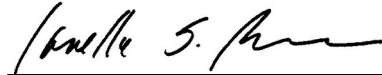
Jasmine Crockett
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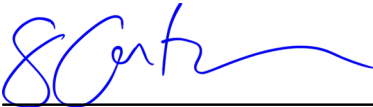
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Andre Carson
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Sean Casten
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Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



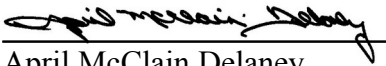
Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



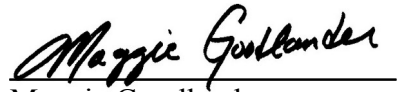
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



Pablo José Hernández
Member of Congress



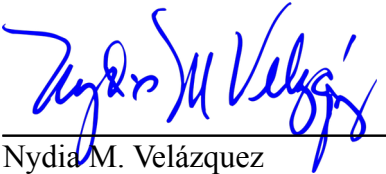
Ami Bera
Member of Congress



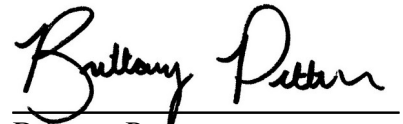
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



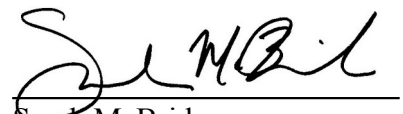
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress



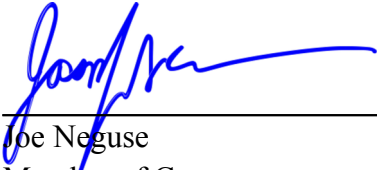
Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress



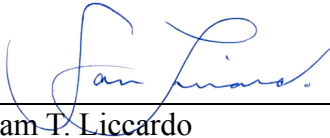
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



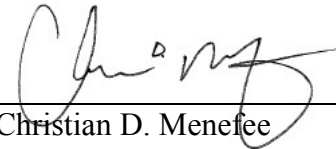
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



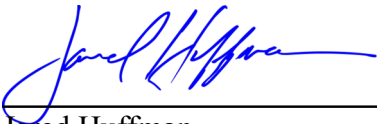
Cleo Fields
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress