



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

September 27, 2024

Khari Garvin  
Director of the Office of Head Start  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
330 C Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Director Garvin:

We write to request that the Office of Head Start (OHS) conduct efforts to connect the more than one million homeless children ages birth to six in the United States to Head Start and Early Head Start (Head Start programs) to help their families secure early learning and housing.<sup>1</sup>

The Head Start programs are critical tools to help families experiencing homelessness access early learning. Under these programs, children experiencing homelessness have automatic program eligibility, and providers can reserve up to three percent of their funded slots for homeless students throughout the year. These policies can help ensure access to high-quality education for some of our most vulnerable children and provide them with experiences that enrich their overall development while removing barriers to housing. Access to Head Start programs will assist and enable parents to search for permanent housing, pursue education, and secure employment, all activities vital to exiting homelessness. These policies and benefits underscore the importance of raising program awareness and eligibility to help families connect to these services.

However, access to early childhood education remains out of reach for many homeless families and their children. For instance, only 11 percent of children between birth and three years experiencing homelessness are enrolled in an early childhood development program such as Early Head Start.<sup>2</sup> Without access to these services and housing, many unhoused infants, toddlers, and young children will be more likely to experience health complications, behavioral health issues, and delays in cognitive development associated with homelessness.<sup>3</sup> These implications will devastate a child's social and emotional well-being and impact their academic readiness and future as an adult.

To address the lack of access to Head Start programs and affordable housing, organizations have designed their early childhood education programs to help provide access to early learning, remove barriers to housing, and prevent homelessness. Through collaborative partnerships,

---

<sup>1</sup> [Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.eclkc.gov/research/what-we-know/children-and-families-experiencing-homelessness)

<sup>2</sup> [Infant and Toddler Homelessness Across 50 States: 2021-2022 \(schoolhouseconnection.org\)](https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/research/infant-and-toddler-homelessness-across-50-states-2021-2022)

<sup>3</sup> [Caring for the Health and Wellness of Children Experiencing Homelessness | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.eclkc.gov/research/what-we-know/caring-for-the-health-and-wellness-of-children-experiencing-homelessness)

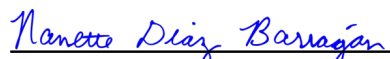
education and housing providers have developed practices that co-locate facilities at affordable housing sites<sup>4</sup>, provide housing vouchers to Head Start providers<sup>5</sup>, and establish child-friendly play spaces in shelters<sup>6</sup>. OHS is critical in helping organizations foster these partnerships and encourage practices that help families access early learning and housing.

With the number of homeless families having increased by nearly 16 percent in 2023<sup>7</sup>, the federal government must continue to explore avenues to help address barriers to housing and protect the well-being of children experiencing homelessness. Therefore, we request OHS to

1. Raise awareness of family homelessness and automatic eligibility for children experiencing homelessness in the Head Start programs.
2. Issue guidance clarifying how Head Start providers can use federal funds to provide child development programs in settings such as affordable housing sites, permanent supportive housing, and homelessness shelters.
3. Work with the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide guidance and technical assistance to state agencies, school districts, housing providers, and Head Start contractors to build partnerships, such as establishing a Memorandum of Understanding between parties.
  - a. Provide information on how current Memoranda of Understanding required between Head Start programs and local educational agencies can be used to improve outreach, identification, and services for children experiencing homelessness and disseminate best practices to help scale promising models nationally.
4. Proactively establish partnerships with state entities to overcome issues with licensing, building classification, and building and fire codes that could hinder partnerships between housing and Head Start providers.
5. Release a Request for Information on how the agency can amend regulations to facilitate better provider coordination, such as co-locating services at housing projects or shelters or providing housing vouchers at childcare locations.
6. Provide information on the regulatory and administrative barriers that Head Start programs encounter when working to improve the lives of children experiencing homelessness and any specific authority needed to remove these barriers and allow for rapid resource deployment.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>4</sup> [Education Development | HACLA](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Partners | OEC Affordable Housing \(headstartonhousingct.com\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Case Studies in Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Expectant Parents Experiencing Homelessness \(schoolhouseconnection.org\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report \(AHAR to Congress\) Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023 \(huduser.gov\)](#)



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

*Raúl M. Grijalva*

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

*Sylvia R. Garcia*

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

*Nikema Williams*

Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

*Delia C. Ramirez*

Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress

*Robert Garcia*

Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress

*Summer L. Lee*

Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress

*Linda T. Sánchez*

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

*Dwight Evans*

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

*Kevin Mullin*

Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress

*Bennie G. Thompson*

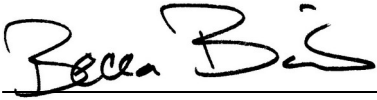
Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress

*Shri Thanedar*

Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress

*Jan Schakowsky*

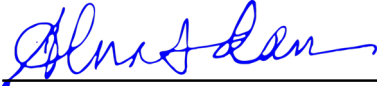
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



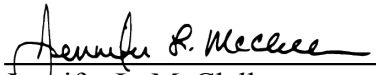
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



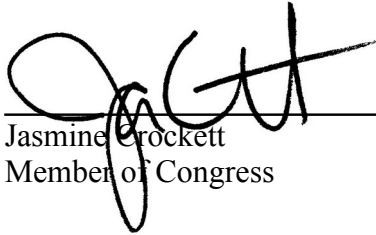
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



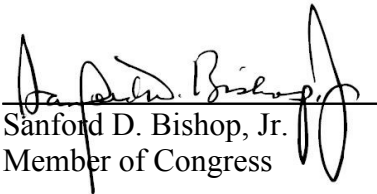
Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



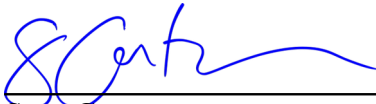
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress

Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

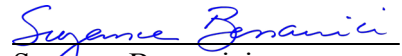
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress

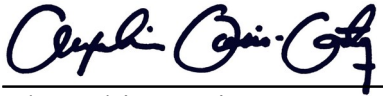
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



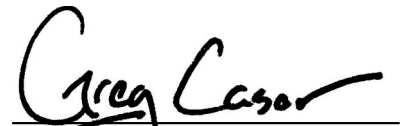
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



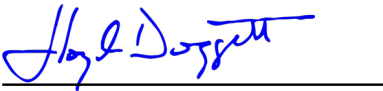
Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



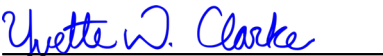
Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



André Carson  
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

*Lucy McBath*

---

Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress

*Barbara Lee*

---

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

*Mark DeSaulnier*

---

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

*Jerrold Nadler*

---

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress