



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday October 18, 2012

Contact:

Joel Ryan, Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com, (253) 486-9077

Katy Warren, Katy@wsaheadstarteceap.com, (206) 291-2021

Real Impact of the Debt-Ceiling Deal: Parents, directors and national experts warn 1,400 Children Will Be Cut from Head Start and centers will close in January

Today parents, providers, and national experts warned that looming federal budget cuts mean 1,400 children will lose their spots in Head Start classrooms around Washington State in January. The across-the-board cuts would rob our state's most at-risk children of one of their best opportunities to prepare for school and life. The cutbacks also would hit at one of the worst possible times for struggling parents - only a few months after their children start preschool - and force them to scramble to find scarce child care.

Head Start programs around the country will face deep funding cuts this winter because a congressional panel failed to agree on a plan to reduce the federal budget deficit last year. Unless parents, teachers and the public raise their voices and convince Congress to act, the failure will begin triggering spending reductions in most federal programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start.

Kris Perry, Executive Director, First Five Years Fund in DC:

"A nation without the will and ability to fund early childhood education is a nation without a strategy for increasing economic growth - but rather one for increasing debt."

Research clearly shows that investments in high-quality early learning prevent later social and economic problems, which reduce productivity and increase debt. Defunding early childhood education will only costs America more in the long term. We urge Congress and the White House to find a sensible approach to tackling the nation's budget woes so as not to deprive children and the American economy of the opportunity to grow and grow stronger."

Mary Ellen Lykins, Head Start Director, Skagit/Islands Head Start:

"We serve homeless, low-income and special needs children. But, as a result of the across-the-board cuts we will have no other choice than to close a center and eliminate services for 37 children."

It's frustrating because our Head Start program is really making a difference. Last fall less than a quarter of our new students entered the program at developmentally expected levels in mathematics. By the spring, three-quarters of these students were at the right levels. In literacy, they went from 52% to 95%.

We can clearly demonstrate that our children are gaining and that Head Start is working. I am hopeful Congress and the administration will find ways to balance the budget without hurting the most vulnerable children and families.

We serve more than 100 pregnant women and children age birth to three, and another 348 children from age three to five, and their families, in Skagit, Island and San Juan counties. These families simply don't have many other affordable options."

Nicole Gonzales, Head Start Parent, Walla Walla, WA.:

"Benjamin loves his Head Start program. He is learning how to read, spell, and socialize with other children. Without Head Start, Benjamin's future could be at risk. I want him to succeed and I know that Head Start is ensuring that he will start school ready to learn. I hope Congress and the Administration can get together and ensure that my son does not lose his one opportunity to make it."

Nicole Matthews, Head Start Parent, Kent, WA.:

"My child is doing terrific. And her Head Start program is also helping me become self-sufficient. The staff is supporting me as I go to school full time and work. I am currently finishing up my AA degree. Head Start is truly a two generational program - helping both the child and the parent.

If the budget cuts hit Head Start than my child will lose her chance to succeed and I will lose the only support system I have in my effort to get out of poverty for good."

More Information:

Joel Ryan, Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com, (253) 486-9077
Katy Warren, Katy@wsaheadstarteceap.com, (206) 291-2021