



State Association Awards Honor Parent of the Year – Children's First, Inc.

For Immediate Release

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TALLAHASSEE, FL – November 1, 2022 – Florida Head Start Association (FHSA), representing Florida's Head Start Programs, has selected Maria Somera as Parent of the Year at Children's First. She's been a Head Start parent for more than four years; her children, David and Anna, are enrolled in the program.

Mrs. Somera has served as Chair of Children First's Policy Council for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, making decisions that directly improved the lives of our children, families, and staff during the most challenging moments of the pandemic.

Along with other Health and Safety Committee members, she helped develop a 30-page reopening plan for Children First on-site services. This document became the guiding protocol for our childcare and early childhood education centers to follow because no other agency provided relevant guidance for a safe return to school for our children, families, and staff. Mrs. Somera volunteered more than 100 hours of service each year, a testament to her dedication.

Mrs. Somera continues to be a passionate advocate for Head Start. She says of her experience: "When you become aware of what others are doing for you, it makes you more engaged, not only in your own life but within your community. I will continue to share my story in the hopes that I can continue helping others. Because of the Head Start community and this wonderful nation, I know that I am not alone and my future, and those of my family, are brighter than ever before."

The Head Start Grantee Recipient selects nominees and is evaluated by a panel of peers and chosen by the FHSA awards committee. Recipients will be honored during the FHSA annual awards luncheon at the Hard Rock Hotel in Daytona Beach, FL, on February 9, 2023. Full details about the event can be found at www.FLHeadStart.org.

About FHSA

The Florida Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 43,000 children and families in Florida. Head Start is an innovative federal-to-local program delivering services from school readiness, comprehensive health, and family support services. The Head Start Program Performance Standards drive programs to strengthen and improve the quality to ensure that all children start school ready to succeed. FHSA has been the voice for Florida's most vulnerable children and families since 1999 and is committed to enhancing and supporting the capability of local Head Start programs in the delivery of high-quality services for our children and families.

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