

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Together, We Can Protect and Strengthen Head Start for Florida Families



Florida Head Start Association
Excellence. Advocacy. Leadership.

Why Advocacy Matters

Every child deserves a strong start in life. In Florida, Head Start and Early Head Start programs make this possible for more than **45,000 children and their families every year**. From nutritious meals and health screenings to school readiness and family support, Head Start is a lifeline for many.

But these lifelines are at risk. Rising costs and stagnant federal funding mean programs are being forced to make difficult choices: reducing enrollment, cutting staff, or scaling back critical services. Without strong advocacy, Florida's most vulnerable children and families could lose access to the support they need to thrive.

That's why your voice matters. Advocacy ensures lawmakers, business leaders, and communities understand the profound impact Head Start has on:

- **Families:** 68% of Florida families are working or pursuing education, strengthening both homes and the workforce.
- **Children:** Nearly 3,800 children transitioned to kindergarten in 2024, ready to learn and succeed.
- **Communities:** Head Start supports 11,600 jobs across 860 centers in 63 counties, fueling Florida's economy while uplifting families.

When you share your story, send an email, or post on social media, you become part of a movement that protects and grows Head Start. Together, we can make sure every child in Florida has a head start.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to make advocacy simple, powerful, and accessible, whether you have five minutes or a full afternoon:

Quick Actions (5 minutes or less)

- Share a pre-drafted social media post.
- Send a ready-to-use email to your legislator.
- Share FHSA's advocacy page with your network.

Personal Storytelling (10 - 20 minutes)

- Customize a social caption with your own Head Start story.
- Add your experience to one of the email templates.
- Share a one-pager with colleagues, neighbors, or your faith community.

Community Impact (30 - 60 minutes)

- Submit an op-ed to your local newspaper.
- Invite a policymaker to visit your program.
- Present a one-pager at a community meeting or chamber event.

No matter how much time you have, there's an entry point for advocacy. This most important step is to start and keep speaking up.

What You'll Find Inside

Each section of this toolkit is designed to be easy to use, adaptable, and impactful. The more you personalize, the stronger your message becomes:

- **Social Media Posts:** Pre-drafted and customizable captions and graphics to amplify your voice online.
- **Email Templates:** Copy-and-paste messages for parents, alumni, educators, and community partners to contact legislators.
- **Op-Ed Templates:** Longer-form storytelling tools for sharing your perspective with local media.
- **One-Pagers:** Fact sheets and talking points that demonstrate Head Start's impact in Florida.

Pre-Drafted Social Media Posts & Graphics

Post Type	Caption	Graphic
Parent Perspective <i>Emotional + Empowering</i>	<p>I'm proud to be my child's first teacher.</p> <p>Head Start gave me the support and confidence to help my child grow. From parenting classes to learning activities we do together, we're both thriving.</p> <p>And I'm not alone. Head Start programs support over 45,000 families in Florida—just like mine.</p> <p>I'm calling on Congress to protect Head Start for my family and every family that needs it.</p> <p>I encourage you to reach out to your representative today to protect Florida's Head Start Programs: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	Parent Social Post - Emotional + Empowering Graphic
Parent Perspective <i>Research-Backed Message</i>	<p>My child's future is brighter because of Head Start.</p> <p>My child is learning, growing, and surrounded by people who care. I've learned that children who have strong relationships with their dads or father figures do better in school—and I see that in my own family.</p> <p>Head Start strengthens Florida's families.</p>	Parent Social Post - Research-Backed Message

	<p>That's why I'm speaking up.</p> <p>I emailed my representative to protect funding for Head Start—will you join me?</p> <p>Visit flheadstart.org/advocacy for more resources.</p>	
<p>Business Leader Perspective <i>Workforce-Focused</i></p>	<p>As a business leader, I know a strong workforce starts with strong families.</p> <p>Head Start helps parents get to work and prepares children for lifelong success. That's why I support it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 68% of Head Start families are in the workforce or pursuing education ✓ 45,000+ children served across Florida ✓ Thousands of kids entering kindergarten ready to learn <p>It's not just a program—it's an economic driver in Florida.</p> <p>I just emailed my representative asking them to protect Head Start. You can too: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>Business Leader Social Video - Workforce Focused</p>
<p>Business Leader Perspective <i>Values-Aligned Message</i></p>	<p>Head Start is good business.</p> <p>It creates opportunity, stability, and growth—for Florida's families and Florida's economy. In my business, I've seen firsthand how reliable childcare helps my employees stay focused, present, and productive.</p> <p>Programs like Head Start make that possible.</p> <p>That's why I took one minute to email my representative asking them to protect Head Start funding.</p> <p>If you care about Florida's working families, I hope you'll join me: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>Business Leader Social Post - Values Aligned Message</p>

<p>Community Advocate Perspective <i>Local Impact</i></p>	<p>As a community leader, I see the ripple effects of Head Start every day.</p> <p>In Florida alone, more than 45,000 children—including 15,000 infants and toddlers—have received critical services through Head Start programs. These services include nutrition, health and wellness care, mental health support, family services, and education.</p> <p>Head Start strengthens our communities, supports working families, and uplifts our neighbors.</p> <p>That's why I contacted my representatives today asking them to protect Head Start funding—and I'm encouraging you to do the same.</p> <p>Speak up for Head Start: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>Community Advocate Social Post - Local Impact</p>
<p>Community Advocate Perspective <i>Future-Focused</i></p>	<p>I want a Florida where every child has a fair start—don't you?</p> <p>Head Start prepares children for school, supports families, and drives progress in every corner of our state. From early literacy to parent coaching, it works.</p> <p>And when kids succeed, so do communities.</p> <p>That's why I took action—and you can, too.</p> <p>Email your representatives today and ask them to protect funding for Head Start: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>Community Advocate Video - Future-Focused</p>

Customizable Social Media Posts & Graphics

Post Type	Caption	Graphic
Parent Perspective <i>Emotional + Empowering</i>	<p>I'm proud to be my child's first teacher.</p> <p>Head Start gave me the support and confidence to help [name of child/children] grow. From parenting classes to learning activities we do together, we're [both/all] thriving.</p> <p>And I'm not alone. Head Start programs support over 45,000 families in Florida—just like mine.</p> <p>I'm calling on Congress to protect Head Start for my family and every family that needs it.</p> <p>I encourage you to reach out to your representative today to protect Florida's Head Start Programs: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	CUSTOMIZE Parent Social Post - Emotional + Empowering Graphic
Parent Perspective <i>Research-Backed Message</i>	<p>[Name of child/children]'s future is brighter because of Head Start.</p> <p>[Name of child/children] is learning, growing, and surrounded by people who care. I've learned that children who have strong relationships with their dads or father figures do better in school—and I see that in my own family.</p> <p>Head Start strengthens Florida's families. That's why I'm speaking up.</p> <p>I emailed my representative asking them to protect funding for Head Start—will you join me?</p> <p>Visit flheadstart.org/advocacy for more resources.</p>	CUSTOMIZE Parent Social Post - Research-Backed Message
Business Leader Perspective <i>Workforce-Focused</i>	<p>As a [type of business] leader, I know a strong workforce starts with strong</p>	CUSTOMIZE Business Leader Social Videot - Workforce Focused

	<p>families.</p> <p>Head Start helps parents [get to work/stay in school/achieve stability] and prepares children for lifelong success. That's why I support it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 68% of Head Start families are in the workforce or pursuing education ✓ 45,000+ children served across Florida ✓ Thousands of kids entering kindergarten ready to learn <p>My business depends on a reliable workforce, and Head Start makes that possible.</p> <p>I just emailed my representative to protect Head Start. You can too: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	
<p>Business Leader Perspective</p> <p><i>Values-Aligned Message</i></p>	<p>Head Start is good business.</p> <p>It creates opportunity, stability, and growth—for Florida's families and Florida's economy.</p> <p>In [my industry/business name/role], I've seen firsthand how [reliable childcare/support for families] helps employees stay [focused/productive/engaged].</p> <p>Programs like Head Start make that possible.</p> <p>That's why I took five minutes to email my representative in support of protecting future funding. It's a smart investment, for all of us.</p> <p>If you care about Florida's working families like I do, please join me: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>CUSTOMIZE Business Leader Social Post - Values Aligned Message</p>
<p>Community Advocate Perspective</p> <p><i>Local Impact</i></p>	<p>As a [role/identity], I see the ripple effect of Head Start in [your community/your</p>	<p>CUSTOMIZE Community Advocate Social Post - Local Impact</p>

	<p>workplace] every day.</p> <p>In [your county/Congressional District], Head Start supports [#] families and provides jobs that strengthen our economy, but there is still an overwhelming unmet need due to a lack of funding.</p> <p>That's why I emailed my representatives to ask them to protect Head Start's future—and I'm asking you to do the same.</p> <p>Speak up for Head Start: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	
<p>Community Advocate Perspective <i>Future-Focused</i></p>	<p>I want a Florida where every child has a head start—don't you?</p> <p>Head Start prepares children for school, supports families, and drives progress in every corner of our state. From [early literacy/healthscreenings] to [parent coaching/nutritious meals], it works.</p> <p>And when kids succeed, so do communities like [your county/Congressional District].</p> <p>That's why I took action—and you can, too.</p> <p>Email your representatives today and ask them to protect funding for Head Start: flheadstart.org/advocacy</p>	<p>CUSTOMIZE Community Advocate Video - Future-Focused</p>

Pre-Drafted & Customizable One-Pagers

[General Head Start Overview](#) (Can add logo only)

[Business Leader Perspective](#) (Customizable)

Pre-Drafted & Customizable Email Templates

Head Start Parent Email Template

Subject line: Head Start Changed My Family's Life — Please Protect This Program

Dear [Senator/Representative Last Name],

I'm a proud parent of a child who attends a Head Start program here in Florida. I'm writing today because I want you to know just how essential Head Start has been for my family and thousands of others like mine.

[Insert a short personal story — e.g., “When my child entered Head Start, they were shy and behind on milestones. Now, they’re thriving and ready for kindergarten.” Or: “Thanks to Head Start, I was able to go back to school and find a job while my child received high-quality early education.”]

Head Start programs in Florida serve more than **45,000 families** in **64 counties**, including infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The program doesn't just prepare children for school — it strengthens families and communities. In fact, 68% of Head Start families like mine [actively participate in the workforce or continue their education](#). That's not just helping my family. It's helping Florida's economy.

Please protect Head Start funding. Programs like this are a lifeline for working families, and your support, now and in the future, ensures that children like mine continue to thrive.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[City/County]

Proud Head Start Parent

Head Start Program Administrator/Employee Email Template

Subject line: Support Head Start — A Proven Investment in Florida's Future

Dear [Senator/Representative Last Name],

As a Head Start program [administrator or employee] in Florida, I've seen firsthand how this program changes lives for children and entire families.

[Insert a short program insight or success story — e.g., “A parent recently told me that our program gave them the confidence to return to work, while their child built language and social skills they never imagined possible.” Or: “Our team supported a family through homelessness, and now their child is successfully enrolled in kindergarten and thriving.”]

In 2024, more than **45,000 children** — including **15,000 infants and toddlers** — received services from Head Start across Florida. Our programs employ more than **11,600 people** and serve **860 Head Start centers** in **63 counties**. We're a critical piece of Florida's education system and workforce infrastructure. Research [clearly indicates](#) Head Start children are more likely to graduate, attend college, and become self-sufficient adults.

Please protect Head Start funding. Florida's future depends on our investment in early childhood education today for tomorrow.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[Head Start Program Name], [City/County]

Head Start Community Partner Email Template

Subject line: Florida's Workforce Needs Head Start — Please Protect Funding

Dear [Senator/Representative Last Name],

As a community partner who works closely with Head Start programs in Florida, I'm writing to urge your continued support for this essential early childhood education initiative.

[Insert a short example of your involvement — e.g., "Our organization partners with local Head Start programs to support family literacy initiatives." Or: "As a local business leader, I've seen how Head Start prepares children for success and enables parents to participate in the workforce."]

Head Start is more than an education program — it's a community economic engine. It supports 11,670 jobs statewide and helps parents contribute to [Florida's economy](#). The long-term impact is undeniable: Head Start graduates are more likely to complete school, stay healthy, and contribute meaningfully to society. **Without this support, many families and children in our community would lose access to the services they need most.**

Please protect funding for Head Start. We must shield programs that strengthen our communities and build a stronger Florida for the next generation.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Organization or Role]

[City/County]

Community Partner

Pre-Drafted & Customizable Op-Ed Templates

The Florida Education Association has a [Write a Letter to the Editor tool](#) that you may use to find a list of newspapers in your county and their contact information for sending these op-ed pieces.

Parent Op-Ed Template

Title: *Head Start Changed My Family's Future — We Must Protect It*
By [First & Last Name], Head Start Parent in [County], Florida

As a parent, there is no greater joy than watching your child thrive, and no greater fear than not knowing how to give them the opportunities they deserve. For my family, those opportunities came through Head Start.

Head Start is a federally funded early childhood education program that serves infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families. But it's so much more than a traditional daycare or preschool. It's a lifeline — one that supports children's development, empowers parents, and strengthens entire communities in Florida.

[Insert a personal story here: e.g., "My daughter joined Head Start at age 3. She struggled to communicate and had trouble adjusting to new environments. But within a few months, I watched her confidence bloom. She started forming sentences, making friends, and waking up excited for school."]

Across Florida, programs like ours are serving more than 45,000 children, including over 15,000 infants and toddlers, at 860 centers in 64 counties. That's not just access to education. It's access to health screenings, nutritious meals, family support services, and early intervention that can change the entire trajectory of a child's life.

Head Start recognizes what we parents know to be true: that families are a child's first and most important teachers. Programs like ours actively partner with parents, helping us become stronger advocates for our children and more engaged in their learning. In fact, research shows that fifth graders with strong father or father-figure relationships, something Head Start programs help cultivate, are more likely to succeed in school.

Beyond our homes, the ripple effects of Head Start are powerful. In Florida, 68% of families enrolled in Head Start are working or pursuing further education. These programs help parents get back to work, finish school, and contribute to the economy. All while knowing their children are in safe, enriching environments.

That's why it's so concerning that current federal funding levels for Head Start aren't keeping up with the rising costs of delivering these essential services. Without adjustments for inflation and the cost of living, programs are being forced to make difficult choices—reducing enrollment, cutting staff, or scaling back support for families.

When we underfund Head Start, it's not just children who are affected. It puts strain on working families, educators, and entire communities.

I urge our elected leaders and fellow Floridians to stand with the families who depend on Head Start. Reach out to your representatives and let them know you support protecting funding that reflects today's economic realities.

Our kids deserve better. And our future depends on it.

Community Advocate Op-Ed Template

Title: *Investing in Head Start Is Investing in Florida's Future*

By [First & Last Name], [Title or Role] with [Community Organization or Business], [County], Florida

As someone who works every day to build stronger communities, I have seen firsthand how Head Start programs serve as one of Florida's most powerful engines for economic mobility and family success.

Head Start is not just an early learning program. It is a comprehensive, whole-family approach that changes lives. It supports Florida's most vulnerable children from birth to age five and helps parents return to the workforce, pursue education, and contribute to our economy.

That's why it's so concerning that current federal funding levels for Head Start aren't keeping up with the rising costs of delivering these essential services. Without adjustments for inflation and the cost of living, programs are being forced to make difficult choices—reducing enrollment, cutting staff, or scaling back support for families.

Undermining Head Start would hurt not just the families it serves, but Florida's future workforce, businesses, and community infrastructure.

Here in Florida, the numbers speak for themselves:

- More than 45,000 children are served annually, including 15,000 infants and toddlers.
- 68% of Head Start families are actively working or in school.
- Nearly 3,800 children transitioned to kindergarten in 2024, prepared to learn.
- 11,670 Head Start staff support families across 860 centers in 63 counties.

[Insert personal anecdote or example: e.g., "At our local food bank, we regularly partner with our area Head Start center to support families. I've seen parents come in who once needed our services and, because of the support they received, now volunteer and give back."]

Head Start programs help children develop cognitively and socially and produce long-term benefits for our entire state. Research shows that children participating in Head Start are more likely to graduate from high school and college. They are less likely to rely on public assistance or be involved in the criminal justice system. These outcomes reduce the burden on state resources and improve the quality of life for *all* Floridians.

Moreover, Head Start is a job creator. Thousands of Florida residents are employed directly through these programs, and many others benefit from the ripple effect across healthcare, education, and community services.

As a proud community partner, I believe supporting Head Start is not a partisan issue. It is a smart investment. Now is the time for policymakers at every level to expand funding to meet growing demand.

To my fellow Floridians: if you believe in strengthening families, supporting working parents, and building a smarter, healthier economy, raise your voice. Contact your representatives and urge them to protect and expand funding for Head Start.

Florida's future depends on the investments we make in our youngest learners today.

A Collective Call to Action

Every Head Start parent, educator, alum, and supporter is an advocate. Whether you're raising your child in the program, leading a classroom, running a business, or cheering from the sidelines, your voice strengthens this movement.

Florida's children are counting on us. Together, let's make sure Head Start continues to open doors, empower families, and shape strong futures for generations to come.

For more resources, please visit <https://www.flheadstart.org/advocacy>.

Take action today. Share your story. Protect Head Start. Build a stronger Florida.

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