

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 18, 2021

Dear Chicago Head Start community:

We write today to encourage each of your organizations, as either current or new Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, to work closely together to ensure that the families of Chicago are served without geographic or quality gaps in service.

We share your frustration at the way the re-compete for federal Head Start and Early Head Start funding was handled by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start (OHS). We are pushing OHS to provide additional assistance to Chicago, including restoring slots, to meet the increased needs as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve the post re-compete transition. We believe OHS' re-competition process was flawed and failed to take into account the specific needs of communities across our city during the pandemic—leaving out several quality, proven providers in vulnerable communities who are needed to meet the heightened demand for comprehensive services. At the same time, we have confidence in the six newly awarded grantees—Carole Robertson Center for Learning, Chicago Commons, City of Chicago, Easterseals, Henry Booth House, and Start Early—who have demonstrated records of providing high-quality services and who face even greater tasks in the aftermath of a flawed re-competition.

We know that this process has devastated organizations, raised deep concerns about the ability to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families, and resulted in tension amongst fellow service providers. We humbly ask that you continue to work closely with one another and OHS to ensure there are no gaps in services in Chicago. It is crucial that these families have no disruption in service. Your organizations have served these vulnerable families at the most challenging times as they grappled with dual health and economic crises. This transition requires the cooperation, coordination, and expertise of all current and former Head Start grantees and delegate organizations to ensure the needs of children and families across the city are met. We are disappointed that your organizations and Chicago are in this difficult position, but we know you will not let these communities down. They need you now more than ever.

Ultimately, the Department of Health and Human Services OHS, the City of Chicago, new grantees, delegate organizations, and former, non-funded Head Start providers must serve a common purpose: ensuring children can access Head Start and Early Head Start services throughout Chicago. As the proverb goes: “It takes a village.” Chicago has a village of organizations devoted to the service of our children and families—led by all of you. In a mission so critical, we cannot afford to fail.

We thank you for your long-standing commitment to children and stand ready to support you in that effort.

Sincerely,



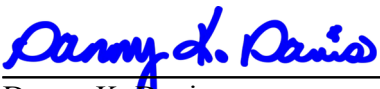
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



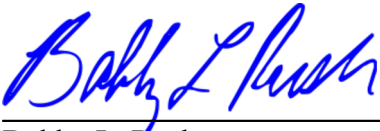
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Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



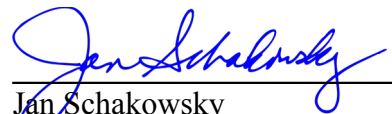
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Marie Newman  
Member of Congress



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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Cc: OHS