



Head Start Caucus

Check-in opens at: 3:15 PM*



SCAN CODE TO CHECK INTO THE SESSION

National Community Action Partnership
2026 Management and Leadership Training Conference
January 30, 2026



Agenda

- Introduction
- NCAP Head Start Task Force
- Mini-Policy Update
- Group Discussion
- Resources
- Contact Information

NCAP Head Start Task Force

Co-Chairs



Edith White

Executive Director
Hampton Roads Community Action Program
Newport News, VA



Thelma French

President & CEO
Total Community Action, Inc.
New Orleans, LA

NCAP Head Start Task Force

PURPOSE:

- **Advise** the NCAP Board of Directors on actions related to early childhood issues
- **Advocate** on behalf of the Community Action Network in order to promote the historical and programmatic synergies that exist between Community Action and the Head Start early childhood education model.



COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP HEAD START TASK FORCE

Approved by the Board of Directors: March 17, 2020

I. Purpose of the Community Action Partnership Head Start Task Force

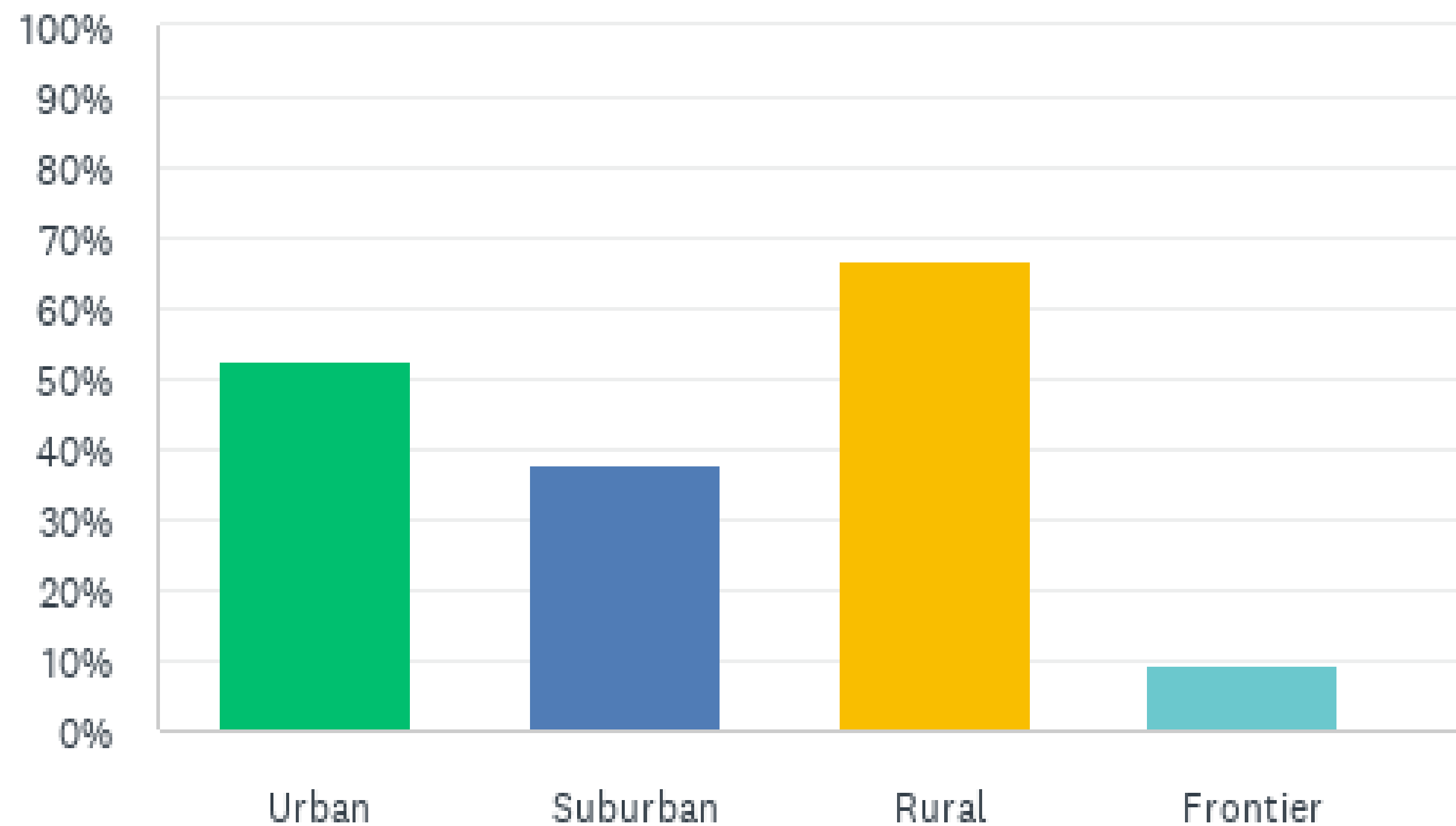
To advise the Community Action Partnership Board of Directors on actions related to early childhood issues and advocate on behalf of the Community Action Network in order to promote the historical and programmatic synergies that exist between Community Action and the Head Start early childhood education model.

II. Values

- We believe that universal access to high quality early childhood education for families with low-incomes, specifically Head Start and Early Head Start, put children and their parents on the path to lifelong success.
- We believe early childhood education programs are most effective and efficient when implemented through a Community Action Agency with a focus on a whole family approach to serving families, because CAAs are able to easily leverage other community-based family supports and services.
- We believe that structural inequities (such as those involving race and gender) are best addressed in a Head Start setting where parents and other caregivers share power with educators and other community stakeholders.
- We believe that efforts to adopt universal access to early childhood educational programming should build on the proven models such as Head Start and Two Generation/Whole Family approaches. In particular, we believe expanded early education programs should require strong family engagement, parent leadership, and community collaboration.

Who Are the Task Force Members?

Communities Served




Breakdown

- 10 CAA EDs
- 10 CAA HS Directors
- Up to 5 SMEs
- Up to 5 Parents

Task Force Actions

- Priorities Letter to OHS
August 2021
- FEI Delay Letter to OHS
December 2021
- Workforce Survey
October 2022
- Workforce Forum
October 2022
- Priorities List to OHS
May 2023
- NPRM Response
January 2024



Helping People. Changing Lives.

community Action
PARTNERSHIP
AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK

August 3, 2021

Dr. Bernadine Futrell
Director
Office of Head Start
330 C Street SW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Priority Issues for Community Action Head Start

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1020 19th Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Denise L. Harlow, CCAP

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Bryan Duncan, CCAP
Board Chair
Statesville, NC

Dulissa S. Sulemays, CCAP
1st Vice Chair
Urbana, IL

Elizabeth "Eliz" Steinberg
2nd Vice Chair
San Luis Obispo, CA

Ricky Baker, CCAP
3rd Vice Chair
Hazard, KY

Peter Kilde, CCAP
Secretary
Glenwood City, WI


Dreama Pridgett, CCAP
Treasurer
Dixons, WV

December 14, 2021

Dr. Bernadine Futrell
Director
Office of Head Start
330 C Street SW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Extension of full enrollment requirement deadline and OHS engagement with C...

Dr. Fut...



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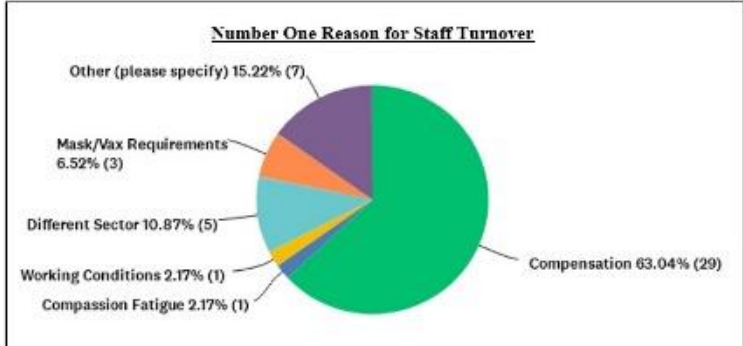
² National Impact Report, Commu
<https://communityactionpartnership.com>

National Community Action Partnership
Head Start Task Force
Network Survey Results¹
Workforce Challenges

Current Staff Vacancies

- On average, 18% of staff positions are currently vacant, which equates to an average of 22 vacancies per program (median = 16)
- Vacancies reported per program ranged from 0 to 75.
- Respondents reported between 0% and 56% of staff positions vacant

Number One Reason for Staff Turnover



Reason	Percentage	Count
Compensation	63.04%	29
Other (please specify)	15.22%	7
Different Sector	10.87%	5
Mask/Vax Requirements	6.52%	3
Working Conditions	2.17%	1
Compassion Fatigue	2.17%	1

Classroom Closures & Student Impact

- 20% of respondents reported zero classroom closures
- About 10% reported some form of partial closure, including temporary closures, reduced schedules, and day-to-day closure decisions
- 4% of classrooms were reported as completely closed
- Over 10% of respondents reported over 10 classrooms closed
- About 16% of respondents reported no students affected by workforce challenges
- Over 30% of respondents reported over 150 students impacted by workforce challenges
- On average, 93 students per program are negatively impacted by staff shortages

¹ 46 respondents from 24 states as of October 27, 2022.

Mini Head Start Policy Update

- Appropriations
- DEIA / Staff Cuts Litigation
- Child Care: Funding Freeze & CCDBG NPRM



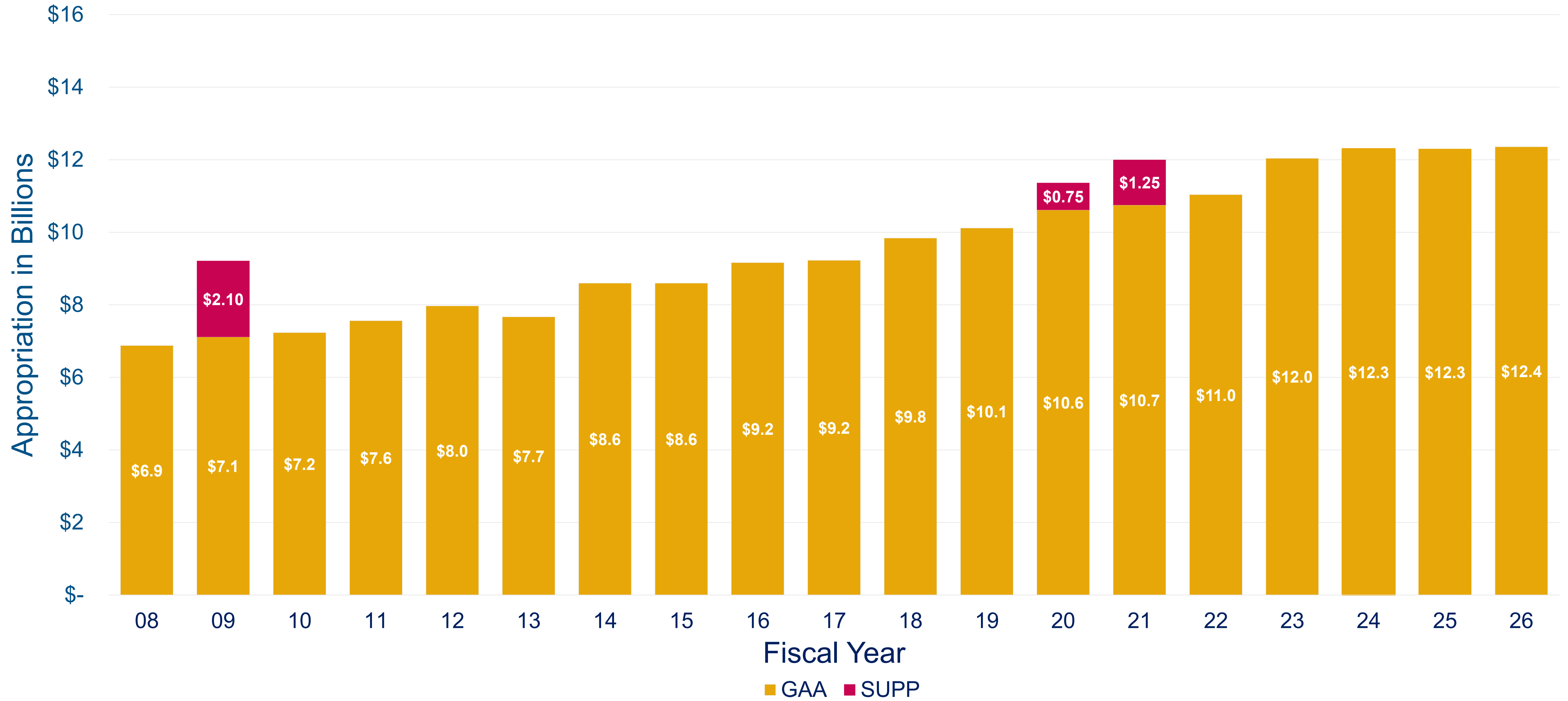
FY26 Head Start Funding

- On January 22, 2026, the US House approved a bill that would provide **\$12.356 billion for Head Start** with a **\$75 million COLA** (House and POTUS originally proposed flat funding (\$12.27 with no COLA)).
- Education grant disbursement deadlines (e.g., ESEA, IDEA, etc.).
- Codifies precise funding levels.
- Encourages HHS to include in future congressional justifications the actual and estimated number of slots in each of Head Start, EHS, EHS Child Care Partnerships, and slots converted from HS2EHS.



Head Start Funding

FY08 - FY26



Washington Head Start Ass'n v. RFK

ACLU _hop

[PRESS RELEASES >](#)

Federal Judge Grants Second Preliminary Injunction Blocking Attacks on Head Start

Case: [Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Assistance and Education Program et al. v. Robert F. Kennedy et al.](#)
Affiliates: [ACLU of Illinois](#), [ACLU of Washington](#)
January 7, 2026 8:53 am

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ACLU Affiliates

 [ACLU of Illinois](#)

 [ACLU of Washington](#)

Spokesperson

[Linda Morris >](#)
Staff Attorney
ACLU Women's Rights Project

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125 Broad Street
18th Floor

SEATTLE – A federal judge granted a [preliminary injunction](#) blocking the Trump administration's attacks on Head Start, halting the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) ban on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, as well as mass office closures and layoffs at the Office of Head Start. These administrative actions had disrupted programs nationwide and hindered their ability to fulfil their mission of providing early education and care to young children from low-income families.

"This is a huge victory for kids!" said **Joel Ryan, executive director of the Washington State Head Start & Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program**. "When a Head Start program has their funding withheld because of their efforts to provide effective education to children with autism, serve tribal members on a reservation, or treat all families with respect, it is an attack on the fundamental promise of the Head Start program – that even children who are furthest away from opportunity should be given the early education they need to succeed in school. Today's decision puts a stop to this attack and allows us to focus on what matters most – supporting children and families."

- On January 6, 2026, a federal district court judge in WA granted a preliminary injunction in a lawsuit brought by the Washington Head Start Association (et al.) that challenged the administration's "DEIA ban," mass OHS layoffs, and Regional Office closures.
- The judge ordered HHS to: **(1) freeze all enforcement of the "DEIA ban"** against Head Start grant recipients and Head Start families; and **(2) postpone the effective dates of the "DEIA ban,"** OHS mass layoffs, and Regional Office closures.
- The **PI does NOT undo prior layoffs**; it only blocks future layoffs for the duration of the case.
- This is **NOT the final word on these issues**. PI only blocks these administrative changes while the case moves forward. A federal judge, circuit court, or the Supreme Court, could still ultimately rule that the administrative actions are legal and enforceable.

Child Care Issues

- **Child care funding freeze & fraud enforcement:** HHS is freezing child care funding nationwide and more than \$10 billion in child care and other social services (SSBG, TANF, etc.) for five states (CA, CO, IL, MN, NY) tied to fraud concerns, disrupting providers and family access.
 - January 28: Senate Judiciary – *Somali Scammers: Fighting Fraud in Minnesota and Beyond*
- On January 5, 2026, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) entitled [Restoring Flexibility in the Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\)](#).
 - Rescinds four 2024 CCDF requirements: 7 % co-pay cap; mandated grants/contracts to build supply, prospective provider payments; and enrollment-based payment for fixed costs.
 - Retains certain consumer-friendly and Tribal flexibility provisions.
 - States could still adopt these policies even if no longer federally required.
 - *Comments DUE February 4, 2026.*

Priority Issues

May 2023



National Community Action Partnership
Head Start Task Force
Priority Issues for the Office of Head Start
May 12th, 2023

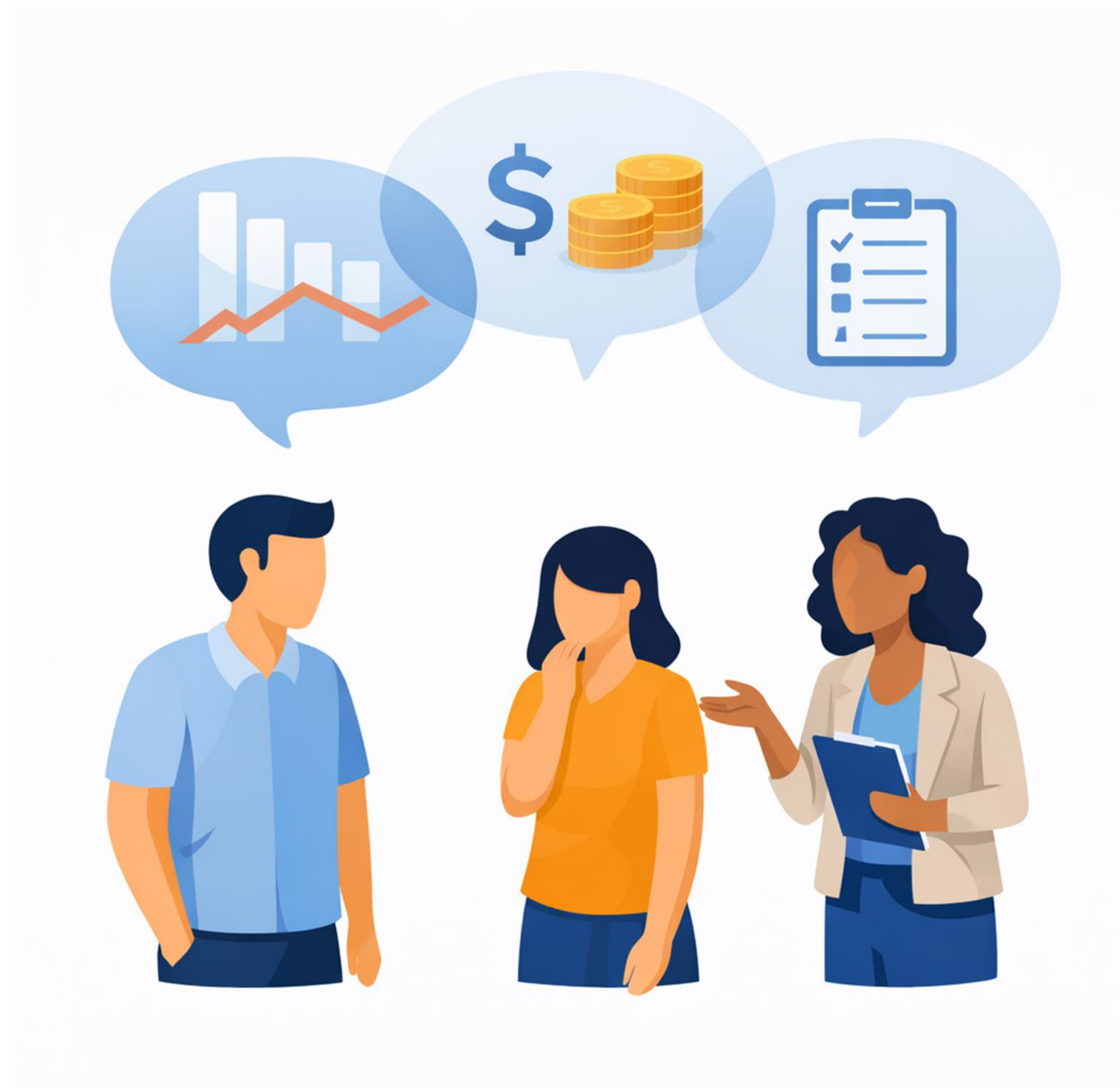
Head Start programs are facing more acute challenges than ever before, especially in the areas of workforce recruitment/retention and meeting full enrollment requirements. The National Community Action Partnership Head Start Task Force, a representative group of Head Start leaders in Community Action settings, has identified issues affecting Community Action Head Start grantees that it believes should be high priorities for the Office of Head Start (OHS) to address. The priority issues were developed with input from Task Force members in meetings and through multiple surveys. OHS should consider the following actions to address the current challenges facing our programs and ensure the continued efficacy and success of Community Action Head Start programs across the country:

- Building a sustainable Head Start workforce, including increased staff compensation, expanded flexibility for conditional credentialing, and investments in career pipelines.
- Issuing a moratorium on full enrollment requirements for at least one year as grantees continue to recover from the pandemic and face resultant workforce shortages, including temporarily eliminating the current 97 percent full enrollment requirement and extending timelines for grantees to meet enrollment thresholds.
- Expanding eligibility criteria for families.
- Reinvesting in Head Start staff, including professional development, well-being supports such as behavioral health, and leadership training for managers to better strengthen teaching teams.
- Enhancing consistency among Head Start regional offices, including for internal policies, operations, and communication timing and processes.
- Reinvesting in facilities, including both renovations and new construction, to meet duration and state licensing requirements and ensure safe and supportive environments for children to thrive and learn.

- Building a sustainable Head Start **workforce**
- Moratorium on full **enrollment** requirements for at least one year
- Expanding **eligibility** criteria for families
- Reinvesting in Head Start **staff**
- Enhancing **consistency** among Head Start regional offices
- Reinvesting in **facilities**, including both renovations and new construction

With Your Neighbor Or A Small Group

(10 mins)



- **What are the top challenges facing your agency?**
- **What's helping or would help your agency navigate those challenges?** (e.g., internal practices, opportunities for peer connection and support, TA, relationships, timing)
- **What actions by NCAP or the NCAP Head Start Task Force would be most valuable to agencies navigating these issues?**

Report Out & Discussion



- **What are the top challenges facing your agency?**
- **What's helping or would help your agency navigate those challenges?** (e.g., internal practices, opportunities for peer connection and support, TA, relationships, timing)
- **What actions by NCAP or the NCAP Head Start Task Force would be most valuable to agencies navigating these issues?**

Engage with NCAF!

- Become a member (it's FREE!)
- Subscribe to CAPFacts for 2026
- Register to attend the 2026 NCAF Conference & Fly-In Day in Washington, DC (March 17-20)
- Attend monthly Coffee Chats



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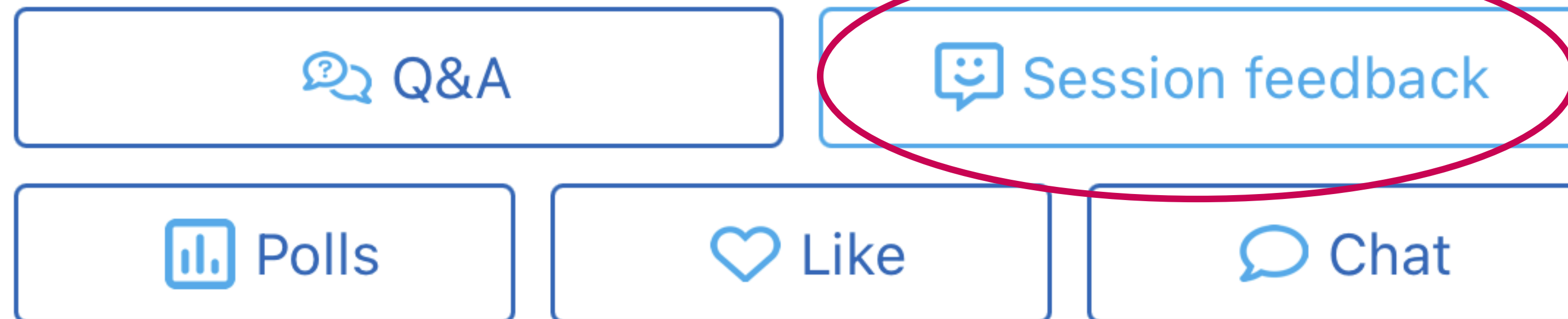
2026 WASHINGTON CONFERENCE & FLY-IN DAY



Hyatt Regency
Washington

We Want to Hear from You!

Fill-out an evaluation for
this session on the app:



Get in Touch!

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