

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 17, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write to underscore the impacts that the recent federal funding interruptions had on Head Start Programs in New Mexico and across the country. The federal government shutdown further intensified previous funding interruptions, creating significant challenges for Head Start programs nationwide.

Federal funding for Head Start programs is distributed on a staggered grant cycle, therefore during a lapse of appropriations these scheduled disbursements are suspended, placing many programs at risk of closing their doors. On November 1st, Head Start programs nationwide did not receive their operational funding, affecting nearly 60,000 children¹, including three Tribal Head Start programs in New Mexico with November 1st grant renewal dates that collectively serve more than 250 children.

As of November 5th, Head Start sites in 18 states and Puerto Rico have already been forced to halt operations and close their doors. Beyond those that have been closed, many programs are struggling to remain open by making difficult concessions such as limiting transportation, reducing staffing, or shortening operating hours. Still others had to take out loans or use reserve funds, which have placed them in financial risk and strain already limited resources. Without timely federal reimbursement or authorized awards, local grantees cannot reliably plan, pay staff, or sustain essential services.

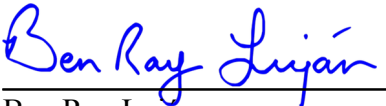
Therefore, we strongly urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take immediate action to ensure that Head Start programs affected by the shutdown receive their fiscal year 2026 grant notification and federal funding. Anything less risks significant harm to the future of children, their families, faculty and staff who rely on these vital services. Additionally, we request that HHS maintain transparent and consistent communication with Head Start grantees regarding the anticipated timing of reimbursements. Clear and proactive communication is essential to enable local programs to plan effectively and sustain operations during this period of uncertainty.

¹ <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2025/11/shutdown-2025-impact-on-head-start-programs/>

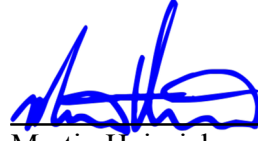
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Affordable, accessible childcare is a critical lifeline for working families in New Mexico. Head Start programs play an indispensable role in delivering high-quality early learning, health, and family well-being services that are especially vital in underserved and low-income communities. Ensuring the stability and continuity of these programs is essential to the long-term success of children and families. We urge the Department to act swiftly to protect this critical program's infrastructure and uphold its commitment to the children and families who depend on Head Start.

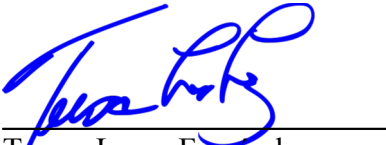
Sincerely,



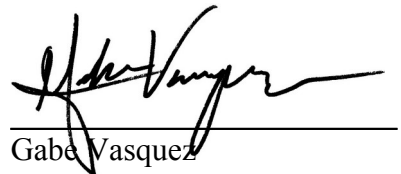
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



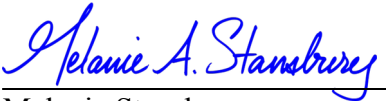
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress