



Kelly Joins Letter Demanding Answers and Action on Disruption to Head Start Programs

Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) joined Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) and a group of their colleagues in sending a [letter](#) to Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services Dorothy A. Fink, M.D. and Acting Director of the Office of Head Start Captain Tala Hooban expressing concern about the financial impacts and lingering uncertainty faced by Head Start programs across the country as a result of the Trump administration memo that imposed a government-wide funding freeze.

While the White House later clarified that Head Start should not be targeted by the funding freeze and the Office of Management and Budget rescinded the memo, Head Start programs were temporarily unable to access the Payment Management System (PMS) to use their allocated federal funds. As a result, Head Start programs nationwide have not had funding disbursed in a timely manner—imperiling their ability to pay staff and keep educational and childcare programs up and running.

“Head Start programs cannot pay their teachers and staff and continue normal operations without the assurances of payment processing and notices of grant renewals and awards,” **wrote the senators.** “This will impact children, families, and communities across the country, particularly the rural communities where these programs represent a large share of the childcare options.”

“Even if this issue extends beyond the Office of Head Start, we urge you to do everything in your power to ensure these programs receive transparent and frequent communication on the progress of their funds being released. Head Start programs operate on razor-thin margins and cannot survive without timely intervention. Children, families, employees, and educators all depend on these critical federal funds,” **the senators said.**

In addition to Kelly and Kaine, the letter was signed by Senators Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), Tina Smith (D-MN), Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), Richard J. Durbin (D-IL), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Peter Welch (D-VT), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Jeffrey A. Merkley (D-OR), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD), and Andy Kim (D-NJ).

The full text of the letter is available [here](#).

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