

PRESS RELEASE | Ciscomani, Sherrill Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Address Childcare Workforce Shortages, Increase Access to Early Head Start Programs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Representatives Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ-06) and Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ-11) introduced legislation this week to address childcare workforce shortages while increasing access to Early Head Start programs to students and families in need.

The *HEADWAY (Head Start Education and Development Workforce Advancement and Yield) Act* would allow Early Head Start classroom teachers to teach while earning their Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials simultaneously. Doing so would give Head Start programs greater hiring flexibility while supporting education professionals and increasing program spots available to families in need of childcare. A companion bill to the *HEADWAY Act* is [sponsored](#) in the Senate by U.S. Senators Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.).

“With 22 Head Start programs at 500 locations in Arizona, these programs are vital to the well-being of our families and children,” **said Rep. Ciscomani**. “However, too often families cannot access these services due to the limitations caused by the childcare workforce shortage. This bipartisan effort not only tackles those limitations

and expands the capacity of these programs but invests in our future education professionals at the same time.”

“For generations, Head Start programming has provided crucial services that set New Jersey’s children up for success while making life more affordable for families,” **said Rep. Sherrill**. “That’s why I am proud to co-lead the bipartisan *HEADWAY Act* to help address staffing shortages at Early Head Start centers so that they can increase access for families. This bill is an important step in the right direction as we continue to work to address the childcare crisis, support providers in our communities, and *expand* economic opportunities for Garden State families.”

The *HEADWAY Act* is supported by the National Head Start Association (NHSA), Arizona Head Start Association, A for Arizona, and Save the Children, as well as local education stakeholders like author Maritza Higuera and Jeff Lavender, Superintendent for Casa Grande Unified High School District (CGUHSD).

“The *HEADWAY Act* prioritizes the professional development of Early Head Start staff,” **said Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director for NHSA**. “This career stepping-stone will help address shortages in the Early Head Start workforce and build the capacity of the program to serve as many eligible children and families as possible. We applaud Representatives Ciscomani and Sherrill for taking the lead in supporting Early Head Start with this critical piece of legislation which will provide opportunities for the early childhood education profession to thrive and children and families to flourish.”

“Expanding equitable opportunities through the provision of targeted support for the Early Head Start workforce will nationally reignite much-needed childhood development programming,” **said the Arizona Head Start Association**. “The *HEADWAY Act* is designed to support the workforce through reasonable and critically needed considerations that will reconnect invaluable professionals to the field and sustain our efforts in supporting those most vulnerable.”

“The *HEADWAY Act* is an innovative approach to addressing the Early Head Start teacher shortage,” **said Katie Dauphinais, President and CEO of A for Arizona.** “By enabling educators to earn their credentials while teaching, this bill not only enhances the quality of early childhood education but also supports the professional growth of our teachers. Moreover, by allocating more resources to early childhood education, we are laying a strong foundation for improved K-12 outcomes. We appreciate Representative Ciscomani’s commitment to this important issue.”

“The *HEADWAY Act*, if enacted, would be a win for children and families across the United States,” **said Christy Gleason, Vice President of Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns at Save the Children.** “This bill would strengthen the childcare workforce by providing a pathway for aspiring early educators to receive training and increase the capacity for programs like Early Head Start, ensuring more children receive a strong start in life.”

“Opportunities for people with dreams of being teachers and helping our future leaders sometimes depend on a decision that, for them, becomes a future with hope and dreams to be fulfilled,” **said Maritza Higuera, a bilingual author and former teacher.** “We only need a simple YES to walk in the right direction to help others and surpass goals until we become leaders who will continue helping generation after generation. This bill provides that to many of our future educators while investing in our future students and their families. This will result in an investment in our schools, parents, and future students, as well as for a person about to become their best version with the simple goal of helping others.”

“Thank you to Congressman Ciscomani for his support in addressing the teacher workforce crisis we currently face in our state,” **said Jeff Lavender, Superintendent for CGUHSD.** “This bill, the *HEADWAY Act*, will help recruit talented and willing future educators who are needed to impact the lives of our future students. Congressman Ciscomani understands that there are no quick fixes to this critical shortage, but his bill will provide quality educators with proven skills to enter the profession. Thank you for action, not just rhetoric, Congressman Ciscomani!”

BACKGROUND:

- Head Start programs provide early education for 3 – 5-year-old children, with family support and comprehensive health and nutrition education for children. Early Head Start programs serve women who are pregnant and children birth to 3 years old.
- A recent [study](#) found that a lack of adequate childcare in Arizona caused \$4.7 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue across the state.
- Specifically, the *HEADWAY Act* would permit some Early Head Start classroom teachers to be in the process of earning their CDA credentials.
- It would also require at least one teacher in every classroom to be fully credentialed with a CDA, as well as a mentorship within the program to facilitate and ensure continued progress toward earning the CDA.

Full text of the bill is available [here](#).