#### Bright Futures AZ Child Care Initiative

#### **Advocating for Head Start**

- Letter to Congress
- Governor's Proclamation
- Head Start visit





OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

WHEREAS, Arizona has been implementing Head Start since 1965, supporting eligible children and their families; and

WHEREAS, for 60 years the Head Start model has provided a high-quality, comprehensive approach to serving Arizona's children and their families by focusing on education, health, and parent involvement and support; and

WHEREAS, the children enrolled in Head Start are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll and complete a college education and are less likely to enter foster care, to be arrested or experience poor health; and

WHEREAS, the nearly 40 million Americans who have attended Head Start credit the program with setting them on the path to success in their future education and in life, exemplifying the transformative power of the Head Start model; and

WHEREAS, the Arizona Head Start Association is a statewide nonprofit organization supporting Head Start programs through advocacy, partnership and professional development since 2015 with a mission to pursue excellence in collaboration with local agencies and partners that promotes educational achievements, family self-sufficiency, and generational progress; and

WHERRAS, for 60 years, every administration and Congress has united in bipartisan support for Head Start, affirming its role as the nation's flagship early learning program and a cornerstone of American education, health, and economic mobility systems.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Katie Hobbs, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Head Start in May 2025 and encourage all Arizonans to recognize the remarkable contributions of Head Start to children, families, and communities across the state and its ongoing commitment to brightening the future of our nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Arizona



DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix on this first day of May in the year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Forty-Ninth.



#### May 9, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole Chairman House Committee on Appropriations H-307 The Capitol Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro Ranking Member House Committee on Appropriations H-307 The Capitol Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Susan Collins Chair Senate Committee on Appropriations Room S-128, The Capitol Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray Ranking Member Senate Committee on Appropriations Room S-128, The Capitol Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Collins, and Ranking Member Murray:

As Governors, we write to voice our strong support for the Head Start program and to urge you to reject proposals to eliminate or reduce its funding in the FY26 federal budget.

Since its creation in 1965, Head Start has helped millions of children reach their full potential by providing one of the highest standards of quality in early learning, health, and family support services across the nation. Today, the program serves more than 800,000 of the nation's most at-risk children, preparing them to succeed in school and giving their families the tools to pursue work, education, and economic stability.

Research consistently shows that access to quality early learning improves school readiness, health outcomes, and long-term success for children in low-income families. Head Start is more than preschool — it is a critical investment in America's future workfore and economy.

The downstream effects of any reduction or elimination of Head Start funding would be significant and damaging. States and territories simply cannot absorb the impact. Cuts to Head Start would strain child care, workforce, health, human services, and child safety systems, and force millions of parents to choose between staying employed or leaving the workforce to care for their children — at a time when maintaining a strong labor market is essential to our economic growth.

We urge you to fully fund Head Start in FY26 and take all necessary steps to eliminate any potential funding disruptions, ensuring continued access to these vital services for the children and families who rely on them.

Governor Jared Polis

The State of Colorado

Governor Matt Meyer

The State of Delaware

Governor JB Pritzker

The State of Illinois

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Governor Katie Hobbs The State of Arizona

Governor Ned Lamont State of Connecticut

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Governor Lou Leon Guerrero The Territory of Guam

Governor Andy Beshear The Commonwealth of Kentucky

Governor Wes Moore The State of Maryland

Governor Tim Walz The State of Minnesota

Governor Kathy Hochul The State of New York

Governor Bob Ferguson The State of Washington

Governor Janet Mills The State of Maine

Governor Maura Healey The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham The State of New Mexico

Governor Josh Stein The State of North Carolina

Governor Tony Evers The State of Wisconsin

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### **Expanding Access & Affordability of Child Care**

#### **Child Care Subsidy**

#### • **\$112.4M GF ongoing, \$30M OF ongoing,** and **\$48.7M OF one-time** to increase child care subsidy payments and expand child care access for working class families through the Child Care Assistance program

Average of 25,400 children estimated to be served each month

Cuts the child care waitlist in half

A robust approach to address child care needs by:

- Decreasing Child Care Costs for Arizona Families
- Increasing Child Care Availability





# **State Budget Proposal**

**Budget/Legislative Package** 

**Working Families Child Care Act** 

- Public-Private Partnership \$3M
- Tax Credit \$1M
- Out of School Time Grant Program \$3M



#### **Budget Package**

- Create a public-private partnership among the state, employers and families (\$3M ongoing, general fund)
  - State matches business contributions up to \$400 per month
    - Shares cost of child care with families, the state and business partners
  - Lowers cost of child care by <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> for families
  - Designed to help working families stay in the workforce
    - Income eligibility is \$150K or less per household



#### **Budget Package**

- Public-private partnership
  - Modeled off of successful programs in 5 states including Michigan, North Carolina, Kentucky
  - Successful employee retention tool for businesses
    - 82% of participating employees agreed they are more likely to stay in their current jobs because of this model



#### **Budget Package**

- Create a new grant program for out of school time (ages 5-12) (\$3M ongoing, general fund)
  - Increases access and affordability of child care for kids ages 5-12
  - Focused on creating new child care slots after school or during the summer

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#### **Budget Package**

- Create a corporate tax credit for businesses that provide child care for employees (\$1M ongoing, general fund)
  - Increases access to child care by encouraging businesses to create new child care slots
  - Includes providing on site or off site child care and expenses for child care
  - Offers a tax credit up to \$100K per employer
  - Can be leveraged with a similar federal tax credit (45-F) (up to \$150K tax credit)



## Additional Projects Supported by Federal Funding

#### **Increase Child Care Availability**

- Provide support and technical assistance to grow the number of child care providers (\$3.5M ARPA)
- Grow the number of providers in Northern Arizona (Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo, and Yavapai) (\$240K ARPA)
- Create a web tool to provide information to families on child care availability (\$500K ARPA)

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#### **Early Education Workforce**

 Support early childhood educators with child care scholarships (\$1M)

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• Provide scholarships to keep early childhood educators in the classroom

#### **Support Child Care Providers**

- Build upon the successful Microbusiness Loan Program to include child care providers (\$500K)
  - Provide grants and technical assistance in business operations to child care businesses



#### How you can help

- FY26 Budget
  - Public-Private Partnership
  - Business Tax Credit
  - $\circ\,$  Out of School Time Grant Program
- Post, Tweet, Share
- Invite us to Present





# **Questions?**