



ASSEMBLYMEMBER — DISTRICT 26

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

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California State Legislators Send Bipartisan Letter to California Congressional Delegation to Protect Head Start Program

SACRAMENTO, CA – Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens (D-Silicon Valley), Senator Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara), Assemblymember Heather Hadwick (R-Alturas), and Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) [held a press conference](#) with concerned colleagues, parents, teachers, and advocates to announce a [bipartisan letter from the California Legislature](#) signed by more than 3/4ths of the legislature to the California Congressional Delegation to urge support for Head Start programs that serve 85,000 California kids and families annually.

Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens said, *“Growing up in a working poor family, I graduated from a Head Start program as a child and consider myself a fortunate beneficiary of the program’s investments in early childhood learning. Head Start provides critical early learning, health services, and childcare options to support the most disadvantaged families, allowing parents to work and their children to thrive. I am thankful to all of my colleagues for standing with me to let our congressional delegation know they must protect Head Start programs for all.”*

“The Legislative Women’s Caucus has put childcare and early education at the forefront of our priorities for over a decade. Head Start is an affordable, high-quality program that working families rely on. With 60% of California families living in childcare deserts, we need not only to protect Head Start from these thoughtless cuts, but expand its reach so that we can set more of our youngest Californians on the road to success,” said **Senator Monique Limón**, Vice Chair of the Legislative Women’s Caucus.

California receives \$1.5 billion annually in federal Head Start funding, supporting a vast and diverse network of high-quality early learning and comprehensive family services across the state. Recent reports indicated active policy discussions within the Trump administration to eliminate Head Start entirely, and while the released budget proposal from the White House appears to spare the program, the Congress has a lot of work to do to pass the next federal budget and is considering unprecedented reductions in federal spending.

Assemblymember Heather Hadwick said, *“Raised in rural California by a single mom who worked two jobs just to keep the lights on and food on the table, I know firsthand what Head Start means to families like mine. It was a stepping stone. We need those stepping stones for our families as we face some of the most challenging financial times in our generation. And in rural counties, Head Start isn’t just one option—it’s often the only option. It’s how parents can work. It’s how children get the early learning, health screenings, and family support they need to thrive. I fully believe that we need to cut our budget and cut the waste. I just hope that we don’t do that on the backs of our low income, working families and our children.”*

Head Start programs and grantees are already facing significant challenges, with workforce reductions having already begun, as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently and abruptly announced the closure of the HHS Region 9 office that served California. This closure left Head Start programs without vital contacts to troubleshoot payment issues and review renewal applications. Nearly 1,000 Head Start teachers and staff around California have received pink slip notices that their jobs may be cut as a result of uncertainty with the federal budget and new opaque processes within HHS.

*“Head Start is a proven \$12 billion program that pays for itself in long-term benefits to children, families, and our economy. Cutting it would hurt not just families, but entire communities. It would eliminate jobs, weaken education systems, and increase financial strain on parents,” said **Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry**. “Its high-quality early education that supports our working parents, keeps them in the workforce, and sustains critical jobs. If we want to take care of our kids, we have to take care of our mommies and daddies. So, we need to protect and invest in Head Start, because it works.”*

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[Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens](#) represents the Silicon Valley in the California State Assembly for District 26. He serves on the Assembly Committees on Budget, Business and Professions, Communications and Conveyance, Rules, Transportation, and Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Human Services. Assemblymember Ahrens is the Co-Chair of the California Legislative Technology & Innovation Caucus, and a member of the California Legislative Jewish and Bay Area Caucuses.