



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan Head Start Association

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MHSA Statement on OHS Requirement of Immigration Status for Head Start Children

East Lansing, Michigan - Michigan Head Start Association (MHSA) strongly opposes a new federal rule announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that would require some Head Start programs to verify the immigration or citizenship status of children before enrollment. This policy shift threatens to limit access to critical early childhood education services and create fear and confusion among families here in Michigan and nationwide.

For over 60 years, Head Start has operated as a program open to all eligible children, regardless of immigration status. The Head Start Act has never required documentation of immigration status and this change would set a harmful new precedent. This decision undermines the fundamental commitment that the country has made to children and families.

While Michigan Head Start Association (MHSA) recognizes that this rule is effective immediately with a 30 – day comment period we emphasize the following:

- **Nonprofit organizations are exempt** from this new requirement due to a statutory protection that prevents them from being required to verify immigration status.
- **No child should be disenrolled.** The Head Start Act states that once a child is determined eligible, they remain eligible through the succeeding program year.
- **There is no immediate change to enrollment policies.** Head Start has not issued implementation guidance yet. The federal notice indicates that additional information will be provided by program offices, and MHSA will share that guidance as it becomes available.

Robin J. Bozek, Executive Director of Michigan Head Start Association stated, “Over the past six months, Head Start has faced many attacks and disruptions including frozen funds, delayed grants, regional office closures, DEI executive orders, and now the policy shift in documentation of immigration status for enrolled children. In addition to these challenges on Head Start programs, we also have huge concerns around the impact on communities as a whole. We believe the panic and fear that this policy shift creates may discourage parents from enrolling or bringing their children to Head Start. If these families cannot have safe care for their children, they cannot work which ultimately impacts our economy.”

Michigan Head Start Association will continue to advocate for equitable access to early childhood education and ensure that families across Michigan feel safe and supported in seeking Head Start services. MHSA remains committed to keeping you informed as we learn more the federal government regarding this new rule and its implementation.