



A WORD FROM THE INAEYC CEO

This moment feels personal for me.

Over the course of my career, I have served as a Head Start teacher, resource teacher, site director, State Collaboration Office Coordinator, and state-funded Pre-K administrator. In every one of those roles, I saw firsthand how Head Start set the standard for quality long before state-funded Pre-K expansion, quality rating systems, and accreditation became common conversations in early childhood education.

Head Start didn't just provide services to children. It created a model that entire communities followed.

Its expectations around educator qualifications, staff-to-child ratios, health screenings, family engagement, comprehensive services, and child safety helped define what quality early childhood education looks like in practice. Programs across states often looked to Head Start as the benchmark for building systems that support children, families, and educators.

That is why I am deeply concerned about the proposed federal changes that would remove or significantly reduce longstanding national Head Start standards and shift many requirements to state-level regulations, including those related to class size, staff ratios, qualifications, and other key program expectations.

I understand the desire to reduce administrative burden and increase flexibility. But from my experience, many of these standards are not bureaucratic requirements. They are the foundation of safe, healthy, high-quality learning environments for children and working conditions that help educators succeed. NAEYC has similarly warned that removing these protections could weaken the quality and safety supports that have guided the program for decades.

For more than 60 years, Head Start has demonstrated that children thrive when education, health, nutrition, family support, and qualified educators work together. The program has served millions of children and continues to support approximately 700,000 children each year.

As someone whose professional journey has been shaped by Head Start and whose leadership has extended across multiple sectors of early childhood education, I believe we should be strengthening the standards that have elevated our profession, not dismantling them.

Head Start helped put early childhood education on the map as a profession. Its legacy reaches far beyond Head Start classrooms. The question before us is whether we will continue building on that legacy or move away from the very standards that helped define quality, health, safety, and professionalism in our field.

**#HeadStart #EarlyChildhoodEducation #ECE #NAEYC #ChildrenFirst
#ChildAdvocacy #EducationPolicy #EarlyLearning #PreK #Leadership
#EarlyChildhoodLeadership #ChildrenAndFamilies**