

November 10, 2025

## **Statement Opposing Termination of DHSPS Staff and Urging Reauthorization and Full Funding of the Healthy Start Program**

We strongly oppose the termination of staff within the Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services (DHSPS) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At a time when infant mortality is rising nationwide, and maternal health disparities persist, eliminating the very team that oversees and supports Healthy Start jeopardizes the health and lives of families across the country.

This crisis is not theoretical—it is happening now. Just recently, Mississippi declared a public health emergency in response to a sharp and alarming rise in its infant mortality rate, underscoring the urgent need for robust and coordinated maternal and child health services. This is part of a broader, deeply concerning national trend that demands decisive federal action, not retrenchment.

Healthy Start is the nation's only federally funded, community-based program solely focused on reducing infant mortality and improving maternal health. With 115 sites across 38 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, Healthy Start provides intensive clinical and social services to over 50,000 pregnant women and their babies—from pregnancy through 18 months postpartum.

What makes Healthy Start unique is its community-driven model: programs are co-designed and implemented with local communities to meet their specific needs. This is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach—nor is it duplicative of other efforts. Healthy Start complements programs like the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, forming, along with others, an integrated system of support for families. A truly effective national maternal and child health strategy requires multiple approaches, and Healthy Start remains a cornerstone of that effort.

The results speak for themselves:

- 85% of pregnant participants received early prenatal care
- 96% had a usual source of income
- 99% were screened for depression—crucial given that mental health conditions are a leading cause of maternal mortality
- 84% practiced safe infant sleep per AAP guidelines
- 97% had a usual source of care
- 93% of children received well-baby visits
- 84% reported father/partner involvement

These outcomes are not abstract—compared to national averages, Healthy Start clients receive more early prenatal care, more well-woman visits, more screening for depression, more fathers

engaged, and more support for family survival and self-sufficiency, leading to lower infant mortality rates. These outcomes represent healthier babies, stronger families, and more resilient communities.

The undersigned national, state, and local maternal health and family support organizations urge the Administration and Congress to prioritize the well-being of pregnant women, birthing families, infants, and the communities that support them by doing the following:

- Rescind and/or immediately stop the termination of DHSPS staff
- Fully fund Healthy Start in FY26 Appropriations
- Pass the Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 3302) to ensure its stability and long-term impact

The maternal and infant health crisis in the U.S. demands a serious, sustained, and multi-layered response. Healthy Start works. Now is the time to protect it—not dismantle it.

### **National Organizations**

National Healthy Start Association

First Focus Campaign for Children

American Friends Service Committee

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Bloom & Bond Maternity

FRAC

Futures Without Violence

HealthConnect One

La Leche League of Michigan

March of Dimes

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Association of Social Workers

National Diaper Bank Network

National Women's Law Center Action Fund

ParentChild+

Parents as Teachers National Center

Perigee Fund

Postpartum Support International

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Start Early

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

The Transparency Program

UnidosUS

ZERO TO THREE

**Alabama**

The Gift of Life Foundation  
Birmingham Healthy Start Plus, Inc

**Arkansas**

Arkansas Lactation  
Bentonville Birth Services  
Community Clinic of Northwest Arkansas  
Doula Alliance of Arkansas  
Essentials Pelvic Therapy & Wellness  
Excel by Eight  
Institute for Community Health Innovation  
Jennifer Burleson LCSW, PLLC  
Postpartum Support International--Arkansas  
Chapter  
The Doula Alliance of Arkansas  
Ujima Maternity Network

**California**

First 5 California  
Global Communities  
Shields for Families  
Yuli Smith LM CPM IBCLC

**Colorado**

Denver Health  
Families Forward Resource Center  
Roots Family Center  
Warrior's Touch

**Connecticut**

CAANH  
Connecticut Voices for Children  
Fixing Fathers One Dad at a Time, Inc.  
Hamburg House, Yale School of Medicine  
MATCH  
New Haven Healthy Start  
Reliant Behavioral Health and Community Services  
The Diaper Bank of Connecticut

**Delaware**

The Foundation for Delaware County

**Florida**

Healthy Start Coalition of Miami-Dade  
Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.  
Overtown Youth Center  
REACHUP, Inc.

Tampa Family Health Centers  
The Center for Health and Equity, Inc.  
The Center for Health and Wellness  
The Women's Fund Miami-Dade  
United Way Broward

### **Georgia**

BOBARC  
Center for Black Women's Wellness  
Father Movement, Inc.  
Georgia OB/Gyn Society  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia  
Heart of Georgia Healthy Start Coalition  
Oak Grove Church  
PL Motorsports  
Raising Wildflowers Birthing Co.  
Rock Springs Clinic  
South Georgia Healthy Start  
Southside Medical Center  
The Center for Family and Community Wellness, Inc.  
Wellstar Healthy System  
Wellstar Medical Group ObGyn

### **Illinois**

Access Community Health Network  
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group  
Lawndale Christian Health Center  
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois

### **Indiana**

Healthier Moms and Babies  
Indiana Chapter of Postpartum Support International  
Indiana Rural Health Association  
MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth)  
Richard G Lugar Center for Rural Health

### **Iowa**

EveryStep Care and Support Services

### **Kansas**

Nurture KC

### **Kentucky**

Black Birth Justice Healthy Beginnings Connect Us

### **Louisiana**

BRBAC Metro Health

Cenla Playdates + Mom Breaks  
Family Road Healthy Start  
Healthy Start At Start Corporation  
Humana Healthy Horizons in Louisiana  
ResourceFull Consulting  
The Family Tree CenLA Healthy Start Program

### **Maryland**

Baltimore Healthy Start, Inc.

### **Massachusetts**

Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester

### **Michigan**

Changing River Consulting, LLC  
Family Health Center  
Friends of Serve  
Healthy Kent Infant Health Action Team  
Kalamazoo County Government  
Kalamazoo Health Care  
Michigan Council for Maternal Child Health  
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe / Maternal Child Health  
Shepherd Baird Hair  
Strong Beginnings - Healthy Start  
The League  
YWCA Kalamazoo

### **Mississippi**

Tougaloo College/Delta HealthPartners Healthy Start Initiative

### **Missouri**

Nurture KC  
Missouri Bootheel Healthy Start  
Missouri Bootheel Regional Consortium, Inc.

### **Nevada**

Children's Advocacy Alliance  
Southern Nevada Health District

### **New Jersey**

Camden County Department of Health & Human Services  
The Cooperative

### **New York**

Bronx Healthy Start Partnership  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Community Health Center of Richmond, Inc.  
Doula TechNique, LLC  
Public Health Solutions  
Staten Island Perinatal Network

### **North Carolina**

Care Ring  
Charms, Inc  
Edgecombe County Health Department  
God's Kind of Woman  
Healthy Start  
La Leche League Alliance  
The Center for Family and Community Wellness,  
Inc.  
Together Helping Reach Improved Vitality &  
Empowerment

### **Ohio**

Cleveland Ohio MomsFirst Fatherhood Program  
Columbus Public Health  
Five Rivers Health Centers  
Groundwork Ohio  
MomsFirst Cleveland Department of Public Health  
Queens Village Columbus  
Toledo Lucas County Health Department

### **Oklahoma**

Community Healthy of Oklahoma - Central  
Oklahoma Healthy Start Initiative  
LIFT Community Action Agency, Inc.  
Supporting Healthy Initiatives For Tulsa

### **Oregon**

Multnomah County Public Health Division

### **Pennsylvania**

Hamilton Health Center, Inc.  
Healthy Start, Inc.  
Maternity Care Coalition  
Oshun Family Center  
PA Head Start Association

### **Puerto Rico**

Comienzo Saludable PR  
Grupo Nexos Inc.

### **South Carolina**

Great Plains Tribal Leader's Health Board  
Institute for Child Success  
Pee Dee Healthy Start Inc

South Carolina Office of Rural Health  
The Center for Family and Community Wellness,  
Inc.

**Tennessee**

Aligned HOPE  
Naturally Nurtured Birth Services  
The Urban Child Institute

**Texas**

BCFS Health and Human Services  
Harris County Public Health  
Healing Hands Community Birthing Project  
Healthy Start Central Texas  
HHCBP  
Hidalgo County Health & Human Services

**Virginia**

Healthy Start Loving Steps - Norfolk/Portsmouth

**West Virginia**

Postpartum Support International-WV Chapter  
Randolph County Family Resource Network  
Upshur County Family Resource Network  
West Virginia Healthy Start/HAPI Project  
West Virginia University

**Wisconsin**

RightWalk  
BCDI-Wisconsin