

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 OBGyn Society
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia
Heart of Georgia Healthy Start Coalition
Oaky 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