

## **A Message to Parents and Families**

Director Khari Garvin: Hi, I'm Khari Garvin, the director of the Office of Head Start at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Every day, families like yours rely on Head Start programs to be friendly, safe, and stimulating spaces for their children to learn and grow all across this country, in cities and in small towns, in U.S. territories, and in tribal nations. The staff who work with the children and families are the most critical part of the delivery of Head Start services.

Recently, our office proposed updates to our program standards, which would require Head Start programs to offer staff fair wages and competitive benefits. We anticipate these proposed changes, if implemented, would stabilize and grow the Head Start workforce and improve the quality of the comprehensive services that Head Start families count on.

By supporting the Head Start workforce – paying them competitive wages for the education, training, and dedication they bring to work every day – we can keep the best qualified teachers and other staff in the program, rather than losing them to the food service industry or retail jobs that often pay more. In this way, our highly skilled and well-credentialed staff can build careers in the Head Start program for years to come, sharing their expertise and developing strong relationships with you and loving on your children. Our proposed changes also address the need to improve Head Start program quality and help programs meet evolving needs of children and families.

It is important to us that you and your children feel safe and supported and cared for in our Head Start programs. We have proposed a variety of changes to Head Start requirements that do just that, including strengthening support for mental health. Head Start parents and families are the cornerstone of our program, and parent and family engagement in policymaking is an important part of what makes Head Start programs successful. We want to hear from you. How would these proposed changes impact you? Do you think they would be good for your children? How do you foresee them impacting your community? Your engagement is essential to making sure we continue to improve Head Start programs nationwide.

Now is the time to give us your comments on these proposed changes. Your thoughts should be shared on a website called the Federal Register. You can find out more information about the proposed policies and how to share your thoughts by following the QR code or the link to the ECLKC website on your screen. You can also share this message with other parents and families and engage with your Policy Councils to provide comments.

We at HHS are committed to being responsive to the evolving needs of the communities we serve and ensuring that Head Start remains the gold standard program for early care and education for children and families. Thank you for being a part of the Head Start family. We wouldn't be here without you. So long.