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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Department of Justice Opposes Trump Administration's Cruel Gutting of Head Start Standards

MADISON, Wis. — The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) joined a multistate coalition in submitting a [comment letter](#) opposing a proposal from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to dramatically cut regulations governing the Head Start program. Head Start is an early childhood education program designed to alleviate poverty by providing young children from low-income backgrounds with comprehensive services that address their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and educational needs. The proposed rule would dismantle long-standing and evidence-backed Head Start Program Performance Standards. This includes imposing an English-only mandate, and revising the cap on allowable administrative and development costs from 15% to 5%, while adding other burdensome requirements that would undermine children's ability to learn and prepare them to succeed in school.

"Head Start has helped generations of kids," said AG Kaul. "The Trump administration shouldn't be attacking this difference-making program."

Head Start has operated with bipartisan support for over 60 years and is a key program used to address the national childcare gap. An estimated 28.2% of children with potential need lack access to early childhood education within a reasonable distance from their home.

Head Start is critical for children who are frequently turned away from or otherwise cannot access quality early education, such as children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, migrant children, children learning English, and children from low-income households.

Page 1 of 2

The proposed rule would eliminate over 1,400 regulations, threatening to upend a nationwide system of care. Specifically, the proposed rule would eliminate requirements for early support and coordination of services for children with disabilities, maximum child-to-staff ratios, safety standards and safe transportation practices, parent committees, staff credentialing and training requirements, and research-based timelines for health, developmental, and vision screenings. It would also remove minimum hours of service, the prohibition on expulsions, limits on suspensions, and end the ability of families to self-attest in eligibility determinations.

In their place, HHS proposes to ban non-English instruction, cut allowable administrative costs from 15% to 5%, and remove or reduce requirements for education, health, and mental health services, which are core promises of the program.

Specifically, the rule would mean larger class sizes, fewer teachers and coaches, shorter program days, and reduced health, dental, and mental health services. Overall, this will lead to poorer educational outcomes for children and added strain on the states' public health and welfare systems. The proposed cap on administrative costs could make it harder for programs to apply for, become, and remain Head Start providers, further limiting services for children in Wisconsin.

Joining Wisconsin DOJ in the letter are the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington, and the governor of Kentucky.