

Public Comment from the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education on Proposed Head Start Rule

Agency: ACF

Docket: Reducing Burden for Head Start Programs

Docket ID: ACF-2026-0595

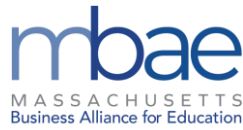
Dear Secretary Kennedy,

The Massachusetts Business Alliance and our networks of members and affiliates, who collectively represent over 35,000 employers across the state, urge you to protect and preserve the Head Start program by withdrawing this proposed rule (“Reducing Burden for Head Start Programs”).

Over our organization’s 30-year history, we and our business partners have seen the impact and effectiveness that Head Start has had in enabling children across the Commonwealth to have a strong start in life. The comprehensive nature of the program – with a focus not only on education but also on health, dental, and nutrition services – as well as the emphasis on family engagement have allowed the 28 Head Start agencies across Massachusetts to have a unique impact on the (more than) 10,000 students served by these programs.

The business community in Massachusetts understands how Head Start programs provide stability and certainty for working parents in need of high-quality early childhood program options while also preparing the next generation of citizens to find success in both education and the workforce. This proposed rule would undermine this successful model in significant and deeply concerning ways, including:

- The proposed rule would eliminate federal standards for best practices in teaching and learning. These standards are research-based and support education quality, child safety, and healthy development. Their removal would render the program useless in many states.
- The proposal would also remove the requirement that all children receive educational assessments and screenings, which allow for the early detection of developmental delays and disabilities. Early detection of these conditions is crucial to ensuring that students can live up to their full potential and enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
- By removing the ability for families to self-attest to their homelessness status or their child’s age, the proposed rule would result in 8 percent of children nationwide losing access to Head Start programs. This provision is another sign of this administration’s attempts to prevent families from accessing programs that might result in the narrowing of income gaps.



MBAE and our partners recognize the need to review Head Start regulations and streamline certain requirements in order to strengthen the program while reducing regulatory burden on states and programs, but the changes in this proposed rule would have the opposite effect – they would gut the effectiveness of a highly effective program that has a proven track record of lifting children and families out of poverty through the route of educational achievement.

We urge HHS to withdraw this proposed rule. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Edward M. Lambert, Jr.", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Edward M. Lambert, Jr.
Executive Director