



# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

## FOR COMMUNITY & ALLIES



Strong communities stand with Head Start—and you're in a powerful position to help. Whether you run a local business, lead a school, work in health care, or serve a faith community, your voice and resources can amplify support for Head Start programs.

 **This toolkit gives you simple, ready-to-use tools to:**

This toolkit is for you—local business owners, school and faith leaders, and civic partners—community champions whose voices carry weight in securing the support and funding Head Start deserves.

Use the tools that feel most helpful to you! This toolkit includes:

- ✓ Show public support through letters and resolutions
- ✓ Share facts and stories on social media
- ✓ Host events or issue public statements
- ✓ Partner with programs to strengthen families

No advocacy experience is needed—just your commitment to children and families.



# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



## FOR COMMUNITY & ALLIES

### How to Use This Toolkit

#### 1. Choose Your Role

- Business owner? See the Business & Leader Action Guide.
- School or agency partner? Start with the Partnership Letter Templates.
- Civic group or faith leader? Use the Resolution Template.

#### 2. Pick a Tool

- Fill-in-the-blank letters to elected officials
- Sample social media quotes and graphics
- Local resolution you can adapt for your city or board

#### 3. Customize & Send

- Add your organization's name, city, and personal details.
- Brand letters with your logo or signature if you wish.
- Use our color-ready graphics on your website or social channels.

#### 4. Take Action

- Mail or email letters to local, state, or federal officials.
- Post a social card and tag your networks.
- Introduce a resolution at your next board or council meeting.

#### 5. Invite Others

- Share this toolkit with fellow businesses, schools, or congregations.
- Host a brief "advocacy hour" to walk others through these simple steps.

#### 6. Stay Connected

- Need help customizing materials? Contact IHSA at [cwelsh@ilheadstart.org](mailto:cwelsh@ilheadstart.org)
- Share your success stories or photos on social media with #SupportHeadStart

# SUPPORT HEAD START

## WE NEED YOUR VOICE NOW

Decisions are being made in Washington that could determine whether Head Start continues serving children and families across Illinois.

### What is Head Start?

Head Start is a community-based, comprehensive federal early childhood program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development and supporting families in their self-sufficiency goals.

### What Does Head Start Do?

Head Start provides **more than 28,000 Illinois children** with early learning, health, and nutrition screenings. Provide **more than 26,000 families** with support services in all **102 Illinois counties**.

Head Start employs almost **9,000 Illinoisans** serving these children and families.



**28,000+**  
Children Served



**26,000+**  
Families Supported



**9,000+**  
Illinois Jobs

### Smart Investment, Strong Returns

For every \$1 invested in Head Start, taxpayers see up to a \$9 return; it greatly improves the likelihood of financial self-sufficiency in adulthood (UCLA Research Brief).

### Creates Local Jobs, Stimulates Economies

Funds go straight to communities to support local agencies and staff who understand their children, families & communities.

### Better Start, Better Outcomes, Long Term Gains

Head Start children are more likely to graduate, less likely to be held back in school, and more likely to avoid crime – good for families and for the United States!

### Stronger Families & Communities

Head Start helps families build strong foundations by supporting children's development and empowering parents to pursue work, education, and stability.

**Stronger Families = Stronger Communities!**

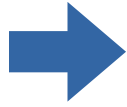
# SUPPORT HEAD START

## WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

### SPEAK UP

Share why Head Start matters to your community. Your story can help inform decision-makers about the real-life impact of these services.

Scan any one or better yet, all of the QR Codes to send a message



NATIONAL  
HEAD START  
ASSOCIATION



FIRST FIVE  
YEARS FUND



CHILD CARE  
AWARE

### SIGN YOUR NAME



Are you a Head Start parent or alumni? You can share your story to help show why Head Start matters. Scan the QR Code to participate.

### GIVE A DOLLAR

Support the Illinois Head Start Association Dollar per Child campaign so they can continue to lead the charge to Protect Head Start!



### GET INVOLVED LOCALLY



Contact your local Head Start program and ask how you can help. Scan the QR Code and find your nearest Head Start location.

Sign up for IHSA Newsletter -  
<https://forms.gle/GYBnLEgrP3EJFtjt7>



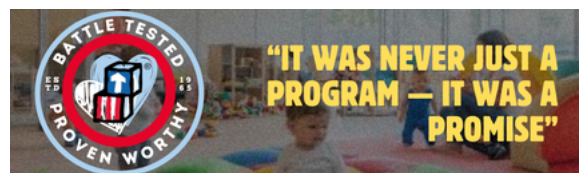
### SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Post a Support Head Start yard or window sign to raise awareness about the program.



Like and follow Illinois Head Start Association on Facebook and Instagram.

Post the Head Start profile picture and banner on your social media pages. Use the hashtag #SupportHeadStart.





# BUSINESS & LEADER ACTION GUIDE

FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, SCHOOL  
LEADERS, FAITH-BASED  
ORGANIZATIONS, AND CIVIC PARTNERS





## FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, SCHOOL LEADERS, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, AND CIVIC PARTNERS

Head Start supports families—and your organization can make a big impact by lending your voice, resources, and platform. Use these simple steps to show public support and help Head Start thrive in our community.

### 1. Be a Visible Supporter

- Display a “We Support Head Start” sign in your window or lobby
- Add your logo to a community supporters list on your website or newsletter
- Share Head Start facts in your staff bulletin or on your intranet

### 2. Speak Up Publicly

- Write or sign a letter to your elected officials (see Community Partner Letter Templates)
- Offer a testimonial about why early childhood investment matters for our local economy
- Invite policymakers to visit your business or school and see Head Start families in action

### 3. Share Your Platform

- Host materials: let Head Start display flyers, posters, or table at your events
- Promote volunteer opportunities: share on your social channels or staff announcements
- Post social graphics: use our “Battle Tested – Proven Worthy” and “Did You Know?” cards with sample captions

### 4. Partner with Programs

- In-kind support: donate books, office supplies, snacks, or coats for families
- Event sponsorship: underwrite a family night, health fair, or graduation celebration
- Career connections: offer job-shadowing, facility tours, or a “day in the life” visit for Head Start youth

### Sample Message to Officials

*“As a [business owner / school principal / faith leader] in [Community Name], I’ve seen how Head Start helps working families, builds our future workforce, and strengthens our local economy. I stand with Head Start and urge continued investment in this vital program.”*

### Next Steps

- Choose one action from above.
- Customize our letter or social post with your organization’s details.
- Share it this week—keep momentum by tagging colleagues and peers.
- Invite another leader to join you.



Together, our community’s leaders can ensure Head Start remains a strong foundation for Illinois families.





# TEMPLATES

**FILL-IN-THE-BLANK LETTERS YOU CAN  
USE TO SHOW YOUR ORGANIZATION'S  
SUPPORT FOR HEAD START**





## LETTER FROM COMMUNITY PARTNER TO HEAD START PROGRAM

Subject: How Can We Support [Program Name] Head Start?

Dear [Program Director's Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I lead [Your Organization Name] in [City or County]. As a [local business owner / school leader / faith-based organization / civic partner], I've seen the positive difference Head Start makes in our community.

I'm reaching out because I want to help. Please let me know how [Your Organization Name] can best support [Program Name]. Here are a few ways we're ready to pitch in:

- In-kind donations (books, snacks, coats, school supplies)
- Sponsorship or co-sponsorship of family events or celebrations
- Hosting volunteer activities or career-day visits
- Providing space for parent workshops or community meetings
- Staff training or expertise (e.g., health screenings, literacy tips, financial coaching)

What would be most helpful for your program right now? I'm happy to meet, call, or visit your site to discuss ideas and plan next steps. Thank you for all you and your team do for children and families. I look forward to partnering with you to strengthen [Program Name] and our community.

Warm regards,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Title]  
[Your Organization Name]  
[Phone] | [Email]  
[Organization Website]





## LETTER TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Subject: Supporting Head Start in Our Community

Dear [Senator/Representative/Mayor Last Name],

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm the \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (your organization) in \_\_\_\_\_ (city or county). I'm writing to let you know how much we value our local Head Start program at \_\_\_\_\_ (program name).

Through our partnership, we've seen Head Start help children arrive in kindergarten ready to learn, support parents with health and family services, and strengthen our neighborhood. We believe continued support for Head Start is vital to the future of our workforce and community.

We'd welcome the chance for you to visit our site or attend one of our joint events to see this work firsthand. Please let me know if you'd like to schedule a brief tour or conversation.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Title]  
[Organization Name]  
[City, State ZIP]  
[Optional: Email or Phone]



## LETTER TO A LOCAL NEWSPAPER OR MEDIA OUTLET

Subject: Head Start and [Organization Name]: Partners for Families

Dear Editor,

I'm \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (title) at \_\_\_\_\_ (organization) here in \_\_\_\_\_ (city). I want to highlight our partnership with \_\_\_\_\_ (Head Start program name) and the positive impact it's had on families in our area.

Together, we've co-hosted events, shared resources, and supported families facing challenges. I've seen children grow more confident, parents gain new skills, and our community become stronger as a result.

I hope you'll consider featuring a story about how local organizations like ours work alongside Head Start to uplift children and families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization Name]

[City, State ZIP]

[Optional: Email or Phone]



## LETTER TO YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR BUSINESS NETWORK

Subject: Join Us in Supporting Head Start

Dear [Colleague/Chamber Member/Partner Name],

As a member of \_\_\_\_\_ (business association or network), I want to invite you to join \_\_\_\_\_ (your organization) in supporting our local Head Start program, \_\_\_\_\_ (program name).

Head Start provides early learning, health services, and family support to children and parents who need it most. When we back Head Start, we invest in the future workforce and strengthen our local economy.

Please consider adding your organization's name to our "We Support Head Start" list or displaying our sign at your place of business. Small actions like this show our collective commitment to families.

Let me know if you'd like more information or materials to get started.  
Thank you for standing with Head Start.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization Name]

[City, State ZIP]

[Optional: Email or Phone]



## SAMPLE - LOCAL RESOLUTION TEMPLATE

*Use by city councils, county boards, school boards, or other local governing bodies to formally support Head Start.*

[GOVERNING BODY] RESOLUTION NO. [ ]

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN [COMMUNITY NAME]

WHEREAS, the Head Start and Early Head Start programs have served the children and families of [COMMUNITY NAME] for over [ ] years by promoting school readiness through high-quality early education, health and nutrition services, and family engagement; and

WHEREAS, Head Start provides comprehensive services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children from low-income families, including children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and children with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Head Start's focus on the whole child and whole family helps ensure healthy development, school readiness, and lifelong success; and

WHEREAS, programs in [COMMUNITY NAME] currently serve approximately [ ] children and families and employ [ ] local staff, contributing to workforce stability and economic growth; and

WHEREAS, research shows that every dollar invested in Head Start returns up to [\$ ] in public savings through reduced special-education costs, higher graduation rates, and healthier communities; and

WHEREAS, continued local, state, and federal support for Head Start and Early Head Start is critical to maintaining these outcomes and expanding access to all eligible families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the [GOVERNING BODY] of [COMMUNITY NAME] that:

[COMMUNITY NAME] hereby recognizes the value and impact of Head Start and Early Head Start in preparing children for school and supporting families.

The [GOVERNING BODY] encourages all residents, businesses, and civic organizations to learn about Head Start's services and to advocate for its continued funding.

The [GOVERNING BODY] will share this resolution with Illinois's U.S. Senators and Representatives, the Governor, and the local Head Start program to underscore community support.

PASSED AND APPROVED this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20.  
[Name], [Title, e.g., Mayor or Board President]  
[Name], [Title, e.g., City Clerk or Board Secretary]

Instructions:

- Replace bracketed text with your local information.
- Remove or adjust "WHEREAS" clauses as needed to match your community's data.
- Add your official logo or letterhead at the top.



# SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS TO SHARE

Head Start doesn't need to shout—it just needs to be seen.  
These share-ready campaigns let you tell the truth about Head  
Start with bold, simple visuals and strong messages.





# SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS TO SHARE

Head Start doesn't need to shout—it just needs to be seen. These share-ready campaigns let you tell the truth about Head Start with bold, simple visuals and strong messages.

Celebrate the legacy. Share the impact. Speak the truth. Head Start isn't a trend. It's a promise that's stood the test of time—and it works.

IHSA's Social Card series campaigns includes ready-to-share cards that highlight why Head Start matters and how it changes lives. Staff, parents, and community supporters can all use them to speak up online.

## How to Use the Cards

- Download any image that speaks to you.
- Post it with your own story or use one of the suggested sample captions provided.
- Tag your elected officials or program page.
- Use these hashtags: #HeadStartMatters #HeadStartWorks #SupportHeadStart

## As a community member:

*"I've seen the difference Head Start makes every day. These cards help explain what words can't. #HeadStartWorks"*







## **BATTLE TESTED – PROVEN WORTHY**

This campaign reminds the public—and decision-makers—that Head Start has always delivered. It's not new. It's not political. It's proven.

- ✓ Visuals showing Head Start's long-term outcomes
- ✓ Posts that explain what Head Start actually does
- ✓ Use it to celebrate, educate, and push back against misinformation

## **"WHAT HEAD START REALLY DOES..."**

Countering Misinformation: Know the Facts – These are calm, clear, fact-checked posts to help set the record straight—especially in response to misleading claims.

Use these cards to correct myths and highlight facts about:

- ✓ What Head Start is (and isn't)
- ✓ Who Head Start serves
- ✓ How it's funded
- ✓ What the outcomes really are

## **"MY HEAD START STORY"**

This is our most powerful tool: real people sharing real stories. Parents, staff, alumni—anyone whose life has been shaped by Head Start can tell their story. Stories are collected in:

- ✓ Fill-in-the-blank templates
- ✓ Social post prompts

## **Tips for Sharing**

- ✓ Use a campaign hashtag
- ✓ Tag your local officials, program, or IHSA
- ✓ Keep it real and keep it brief—your voice matters
- ✓ Share one card, one quote, or one photo at a time
- ✓ Hashtags: #BattleTestedProvenWorthy #HeadStartStrong #FundHeadStart

Scan to browse and download social media cards.  
Use them to speak up, share your story, and show  
what Head Start really does.



## TOOLKIT DISCLAIMER & PRIVACY

### **Purpose & Use**

This toolkit is provided by the Illinois Head Start Association to help community partners, businesses, schools, faith groups, and civic leaders support and advocate for Head Start. It is for informational and educational purposes only—not legal or professional advice.

### **Nonpartisan Guidance**

All templates and materials are designed to share facts and personal or organizational experiences. They do not endorse or oppose any candidate, political party, or specific piece of legislation.

### **Privacy & Confidentiality**

When sharing or publishing letters, stories, or testimonials, please respect the privacy of families and staff. Do not include sensitive personal data (e.g., full names of children, medical details) without explicit permission.

### **Adapt & Brand**

You are welcome to customize these resources—add your organization's logo, adjust language to suit your audience, or include local data. Ensure that core messages remain accurate and nonpartisan.

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### **Feedback & Updates**

IHSA may revise or add to these resources over time. For the latest versions or to share feedback, contact us at [email protected] or visit [ilheadstart.org/advocacy](http://ilheadstart.org/advocacy).