

Statement of

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**Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Hearing on The Impact of Sequestration on Education Programs
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Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Shelby, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the potential impact of the impending sequester of non-defense discretionary programs, in particular, early childhood education programs supported through Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care funding. I have been privileged to serve as President and CEO of The Campagna Center, in Alexandria, Virginia for the past year and have worked in the field of early childhood education for over 20 years. The Campagna Center serves over 1,700 children through a range of early childhood, school age, youth, and family development programs designed to empower and engage parents as they address their children's academic and social needs. We, like many other early childhood centers across the country, successfully blend, braid, and leverage a multitude of local, state, and federal funding with precious private investment and shared community resources to provide the highest quality services to the most vulnerable families in Alexandria.

The looming 7.8% cut to non-defense discretionary programs will have serious, immediate, and disruptive impact on the vulnerable children and families we serve. Due to increases in our operating costs over the past few years, in particular deferred maintenance, health insurance for staff, and rising utility costs, we do not have the budget cushion to withstand this large of a reduction without cutting children, families, and staff from our program. Nationally, the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that this cut, via sequestration, will result in 100,000 fewer children receiving Head Start and Early Head Start services, and 80,000 fewer children receiving child care assistance.

We know that Congress is committed to Head Start—over the past few years there has been solid bipartisan support for quality early childhood education and Head Start has not had to cut children from its programs. However, we work hand in hand with child care services and other early learning programs, especially those funded or supplemented with State dollars. Over the last year, states across the country have made significant cuts to child care and pre-K programs. The ripple effects of this, combined with further cuts via sequestration, will be devastating to early learning across the country.

In Virginia alone, it is estimated that more than 800 children and their families would no longer receive federally funded child care assistance. Without child care assistance, families will be

faced with the difficult decision of what to do with their children while at work. Unfortunately, that choice can lead to kids being put in unsafe environments or their parents forced to reduce their hours or even quit their jobs. For Head Start and Early Head Start, the cut would also equate to the loss of roughly 1,140 children and their families in the state, according to the National Head Start Association.

My agency, The Campagna Center, is a delegate agency of the City of Alexandria and among the children we serve, we are funded to provide assistance to 309 Head Start Children and 108 Early Head Start children as a grantee. A cut of this magnitude would mean that approximately 24 fewer children would be served in Head Start and approximately 10 fewer in Early Head Start. Currently, we have to raise an additional \$75,000 dollars each year just to be able to continue providing quality services to our Early Head Start children because the current funding level has not been able to address our rising costs; this is in addition to the 20% nonfederal match that we have to provide to operate the program. There is simply no way we could absorb a cut as deep as proposed with other funding sources in this very challenged economic environment. Teacher and Teacher Assistant jobs would be lost, as well as reductions in time for staff that support our teachers – Family Service Support professionals, Nutrition Specialists, and others that are vital to the life success of our children.

Additionally, due to economic woes, the need in our community has grown much faster than our ability to provide services. As a city, Alexandria has deep pockets of poverty that greatly undermine many families' ability to pay for early childhood services. Last year we had 206 children on our waitlist for Head Start and 169 children on the Early Head Start waiting list. Unfortunately we expect this number to keep growing even without facing deep cuts; for our program's Spring enrollment fair, we had well over 500 parents seeking a spot for their children in our program. Any cuts in funding would certainly push more families onto long waiting lists, where the chance to gain access to early childhood education is slim to none.

In addition to the depth of the cut, one of our greatest fears is its timing. January 2013, the target date these cuts go into effect, is right in the middle of the program year for us as well as our K-12 colleagues. We simply do not know how we can possibly tell families that their services will lapse come January. These services are critical to helping stabilize at-risk families, so that their children will be assured a home environment that nurtures a lifetime of learning and success.

Just recently, I had the opportunity to talk with a parent that knows firsthand how much Head Start has meant to her family. This mother came to our program in 2010 following a divorce, and was in need of assistance on many levels. With very little family support and few resources at her disposal, she was concerned about how she was going to make ends meet and provide for her children. In two short years, despite becoming homeless, her oldest child thrived in our program, has since successfully completed kindergarten, and is doing very well in school. This parent has been able to enter a training program that has her close to earning her Child

Development Associate credential and she is gainfully employed as a teacher assistant and very much motivated to do what it will take to continue her education and support her children's education. She credits all of this success to the support she received from teachers, home visitors, and family support staff in our program. This mother's story reflects the story of many parents who have come to rely on Head Start and other early care and education programs that support child and family success.

Cuts in this area will have lasting impact. Quality early education prepares the nation's youngest children for a lifetime of learning and success. In fact, studies show that for every one dollar invested in a Head Start child, society earns at least \$7 back through increased earnings, employment, and family stability;ⁱ as well as decreased welfare dependency,ⁱⁱ health care costs,ⁱⁱⁱ crime costs,^{iv} grade retention,^v and special education.^{vi}

I firmly agree that our national deficit is a looming problem; as an advocate serving children, I too am concerned about leaving significant debt behind to be paid for by the next generation. On behalf of my colleagues across the country, I urge this subcommittee to take a leadership role in finding a balanced approach that averts the sequester and ensures that this deficit reduction effort is not financed with cuts to programs that help our most vulnerable citizens. Hundreds of thousands of children and families in your home states are counting on it. Thank you.

ⁱ Ludwig, J. and Phillips, D. (2007). The Benefits and Costs of Head Start. *Social Policy Report*. 21 (3: 4); Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(3): 111-134; Meier, J. (2003, June 20). Interim Report. Kindergarten Readiness Study: Head Start Success. Preschool Service Department, San Bernardino County, California; Deming, D. (2009, July). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start, p. 112.

ⁱⁱ Meier, J. (2003, June 20). Kindergarten Readiness Study: Head Start Success. Interim Report. Preschool Services Department of San Bernardino County.

ⁱⁱⁱ Frisvold, D. (2006, February). Head Start participation and childhood obesity. Vanderbilt University Working Paper No. 06-WG01; Currie, J. and Thomas, D. (1995, June). Does Head Start Make a Difference? *The American Economic Review*, 85 (3): 360; Anderson, K.H., Foster, J.E., & Frisvold, D.E. (2009). Investing in health: The long-term impact of Head Start on smoking. *Economic Inquiry*, 48 (3), 587-602.

^{iv} Reuters. (2009, March). Cost of locking up Americans too high: Pew study; Garces, E., Thomas, D. and Currie, J. (2002, September). Longer-term effects of Head Start. *American Economic Review*, 92 (4): 999-1012.

^v Barnett, W. (2002, September 13). The Battle Over Head Start: What the Research Shows.; Garces, E., Thomas, D. and Currie, J. (2002, September). Longer-Term Effects of Head Start. *American Economic Review*, 92 (4): 999-1012.

^{vi} NHSA Public Policy and Research Department analysis of data from a Montgomery County Public Schools evaluation. See Zhao, H. & Modarresi, S. (2010, April). *Evaluating lasting effects of full-day prekindergarten program on school readiness, academic performance, and special education services*. Office of Shared Accountability, Montgomery County Public Schools.