

# CCS Early Learning “Education for Advocates”

Making a difference in the lives and families of  
young children within our communities

since 1971



April

2024



## Scan with your Smartphone Now.

I'll Try to Convince you to **Take Action** in my  
5-7 minutes!

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Head Start!



<https://www.akheadstart.org/legislative-advocacy/>



# Because Funding For Head Start Has **NOT** Been Prioritized at the Federal or the State Levels... we are serving fewer and fewer children and families.

- Head Start Slots Available:
  - 22-23 School Year (last year) = 245
  - 23-24 School Year (current year; 50 fewer slots) = 195
    - Via smaller class sizes, 1 less Palmer classroom
  - 24-25 School Year (next year; 45 fewer slots) = 150
    - ***Meadow Lakes Head Start Center will close after this spring and not re-open.***
      - It has provided services for Big Lake, Houston, Meadow Lakes since 1997.
    - ***Early Head Start – Home Based Program will be reduced from 44 children to 22 children***



EDUCATION

## Stagnant funding results in Alaska pre-K school closure, instability for vulnerable children

Head Start programs scramble as COVID-19 relief and a one-time state funding boost peter out

BY: CLAIRE STREMPLE - FEBRUARY 3, 2024 5:00 AM





Citizens of Alaska...

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# What Are Your Priorities?

Where/How Do You Want Your Federal Tax Dollars Used?

What Role Should The State of Alaska Have?

What Is Our Role As Citizens of Alaska?



# Head Start 101



- **It is not:**

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- Child Care/Day Care

- Safe place – hopefully educational – allows parents to work. Available to all that pay (or receive subsidy) if they can find a spot
- 8 Child Care programs have closed in Mat-Su since 2020

- State Funded Pre-K (or Preschool)

- Available to all (public education) – usually voluntary – focuses on school preparation.

These are needed, necessary, and important - but **Head Start is targeted and designed specifically to deliver services to most vulnerable, both children AND families.**



# What is Head Start and Early Head Start?

- Purpose – Prepare children and families for success in school and life!
- Comprehensive Approach – Multi-generational

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- Child

- **Health, Dental, Nutrition, Child Transportation, Mental Health, Early Identification and Treatment of Disabilities, Development of Cognitive and Social Skills**

- Family

- Setting and Obtaining Child and Family Goals
- Parenting Skills and Education in Child Development
- Improving Family Situations (planned or crisis)
- Family Involvement, Advocacy, Program Leadership



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# Who We Serve

## Categorically Eligible (Top of the List)

- Children in foster care
- Homeless children

## Priority also given to (Higher on the List)

- Low Income Families
- Children with disabilities
- Children who will be in kindergarten the following year
- Returning Head Start children
- Families in crisis

**Currently at CCS,  
approximately  
40% of our  
enrolled children  
are either in  
foster care - or  
their families are  
homeless**

**For Context in 2021-22  
the % of slots utilized  
across the NATION  
by all Head Start**

**Programs:**

**Homelessness – 6.38%**

**Foster Care – 2.85%**

### 2024 Alaska Income Guidelines

Family Size	Income
2	\$25,540
3	\$32,270
4	\$39,000
5	\$45,730
6	\$52,460



# THE BIG PICTURE

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Because of long-term, ongoing population growth in the Mat-Su - the need for services in our area has **ALWAYS** far exceeded what we can provide. Federal funding is **NOT** tied directly to community need or population growth.





# The Urgent Issue

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**Federal Funding For These  
Services Are At Risk**

**AND**

**Services Are Already Decreasing**

(Meadow Lakes and Early Head Start Home Based)



# Federal Funding At Risk Because...

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- CCS has not been fully enrolled (our federal grant requires us to enroll an established number of children)
  - We can't be fully enrolled if we don't have enough classroom staff hired
    - Our federal and state grants (thus our wages) have not kept up with inflation
      - Our wages are low
        - We cannot effectively recruit and retain all the employees we need.

This is true statewide! 12 of 17 grantees in Alaska are underenrolled.



# STAFFING

## THE NUMBERS TELL THE (SAD) STORY

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1. When fully staffed CCS would have 134 regular employees
2. We currently have 120 employees and 14 vacancies
3. 19/20 School Year – 55 new hires
4. 20/21 School Year – 40 new hires
5. 21/22 School Year – 41 new hires
6. 22/23 School Year – 91 new hires
7. 23/24 School Year (Through March) – 40 new hires



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# STAFFING

## THE NUMBERS TELL THE (SAD) STORY

### Entry Level Staff - Wage Comparison

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- Starting Entry Level Wage at Target in Wasilla - \$17.25/hour
- Starting Wage For CCS Early Learning Substitute - \$15.02/hour

#### Entry Level Wages After 2 Years

- Entry Level Wage at Target in Wasilla after 2 years of employment - \$23.50/hour
- Average Wage for Current CCS Substitute Teachers - \$15.89/hour
- Average Wage for Current CCS Teacher Aides no degree required - \$16.32/hour

# STATE OF ALASKA OPTIONS TO HELP SOLVE THIS PROBLEM

- State of Alaska (Legislature and Governor) could **SHOULD:**
  - Increase the state grant amount, which has not increased since 2010. Statewide funding for Head Start has been stuck at \$6.8 million since 2010.
  - The State of Alaska made the commitment in the 1990's to protect the federal investment and support Alaskan programs/services by providing the 20% non-federal match that is required.
    - Match provided in 2010 - \$6.8 million = 20%
    - Match provided in Governor's proposed budget this year - \$6.8 million = 11%



20% Match for State of Alaska = \$12 million (increase of \$5.2 million)



# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE FOR STATE FUNDING TO HEAD START?

February 7, 2008

Frequently Asked Questions for Grant Awards and Amendments,  
Budget Revisions and Reimbursements



## General Overview

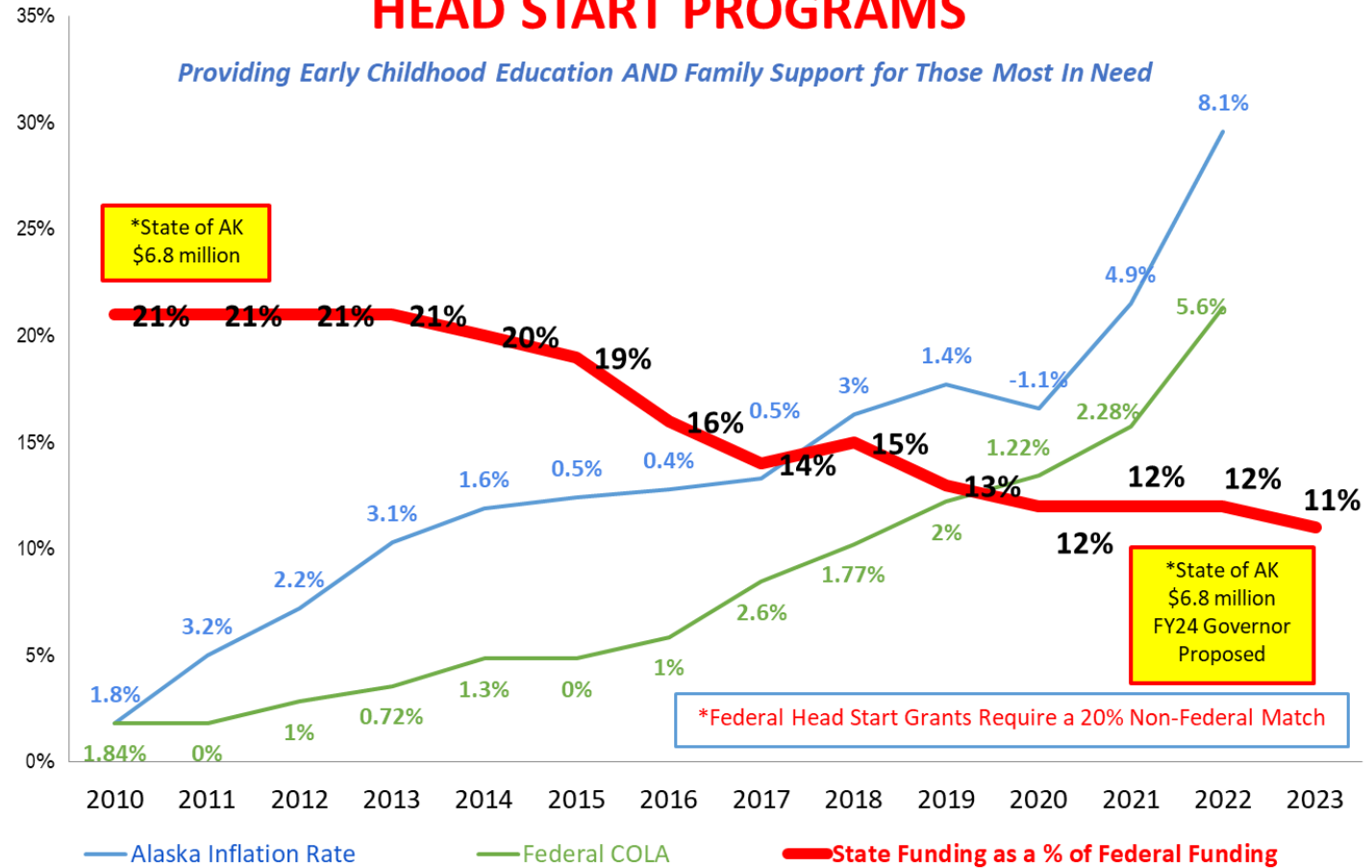
1. *What is the purpose of the Head Start funds provided through the State of Alaska?*
  - The funds provided through the State of Alaska are to **guarantee that grantees meet the required match for** quality program improvement, professional development, training and technical assistance, target school readiness and whenever possible serve additional children and families.

# Has State funding met these two purposes?

1. Guarantee that Grantees Meet the Required Match?

## A FUNDING CRISIS FOR ALASKAN HEAD START PROGRAMS

*Providing Early Childhood Education AND Family Support for Those Most In Need*

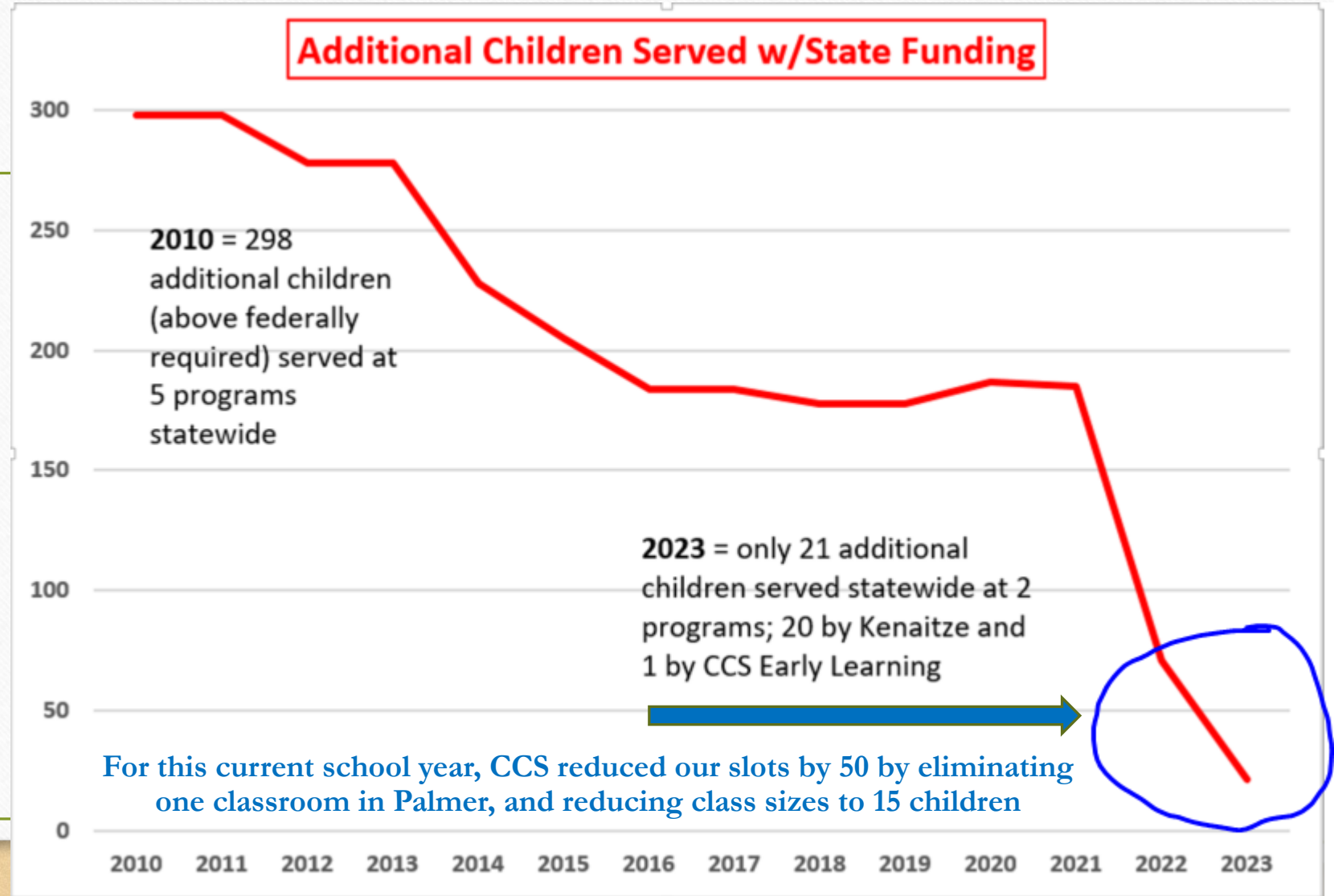




# Has State funding met these two purposes?

... and

2. Whenever Possible, Serve Additional Children & Families?



# Last Year's Legislative Session in Juneau

- The Alaska Head Start Association **successfully convinced legislators** in both the House and the Senate that Head Start **urgently** needed additional investment if the federal funds were to be protected. Both the House and the Senate increased statewide Head Start funding by \$5 million to restore the 20% match
- In last minute negotiations between the House and the Senate to agree on a budget, this \$5 million increase to Head Start was **changed to ONE-TIME funding**. ONE-TIME funding does not support wage increases
- Governor Dunleavy used his **line-item veto to cut \$3.5** of this ONE-TIME funding from the budget, leaving \$1.5 million of ONE-TIME funding increase for STATEWIDE HEAD START.
  - **All CCS Early Learning employees received 3 - \$300 one-time bonuses to help supplement low wages**
- April 6, 2023 - Governor Dunleavy Established Task Force on Child Care to “improve the availability and affordability of quality child care throughout Alaska.”
- December 14, 2023 - Governor Dunleavy’s proposed budget for FY24 returns Head Start funding to \$6.8 million, the same amount provided since 2010 = 11% match of federal funds.



# THIS Year's Legislative Session in Juneau

- April 6, 2023 - Governor Dunleavy Established Task Force on Child Care to “improve the availability and affordability of quality child care throughout Alaska.”
- December 14, 2023 - Governor Dunleavy’s proposed budget for FY24 returns Head Start funding to \$6.8 million, the same amount provided since 2010 = 11% match of federal funds.
- Monday April 1, 2024 – ***The House Finance Committee Increased State Funding for Head Start from \$6.8 million to \$12 million – a return to the Full 20% Match!*** This action must be retained in the House Budget through the full House Floor.
- Coming weeks... Alaska Senate
- May/June.... Governor Dunleavy



STEP ONE OF MANY!



# If Head Start aligns with **YOUR** priorities... please sign this quick letter!

## **WE SUPPORT THE STATE OF ALASKA FUNDING HEAD START AT 20%**

I understand the urgent and critical issues that are currently present in Alaskan Head Start Programs. I strongly encourage our State Legislature and Governor Dunleavy to return state funding to the full 20% match against the federal dollars (from my federal taxes!) that come back to Alaska. Flat funding from the state of \$6.8 million dollars since 2010 (the match is now down to 11%) is unwise and is causing harm in my community. Please increase funding to \$12 million in the Department of Education – Early Learning Coordination Line Item.



[www.akheadstart.org/legislative-advocacy](http://www.akheadstart.org/legislative-advocacy)



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[www.facebook.com/AlaskaHeadStart](https://www.facebook.com/AlaskaHeadStart)



# One CCS Parent Says...

"When I correspond with the staff they treat my family with the future potential, not the current circumstance. I was homeless with no job when my daughter started. I am now gainfully employed with a place to call our own. They treated my family each encounter as if we had already succeeded in all our goals."



~One Response From CCS Family Survey~

