

Head Start Testimony in House Human Services on H.171

What H.171 will do:

- (1) expand the eligibility of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program;
- (2) appropriate funds for the implementation of the Bright Futures Information System modernization plan;
- (3) establish scholarships and student loan repayment assistance programs for existing and prospective members of the child care workforce;
- (4) require the completion of studies on child care financing and governance; and
- (5) establish an Early Care and Education Governance and Administration Advisory Committee.

Testimony

I'm Christy Swenson. I am the director of Capstone Head Start, which serves Lamoille, Washington, and Orange Counties.

Head Start programs are multi-generational programs that provide comprehensive child development services for high-risk children prenatal through five and provide wide-ranging social services to their family. The majority of children served by Head Start come from very low-income families. Head Start serves children ages 3-5 and their families. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children birth to age 3 and their families. Services for children are designed to promote school readiness, and include early education, health, nutrition, mental health, and services for children with special needs. Services for parents are designed to promote family engagement and include parent leadership and social service supports.

Head Start services are tailored to meet a family's needs. Head Start programs serve families and children across Vermont and are all uniquely structured to reflect the need of the community they serve. All programs in Vermont offer center-based childcare/early childhood education. Some also offer classrooms in elementary schools, classrooms in partnership with other childcare providers, and/or home visiting programs. All children enrolled in Head Start receive home visits, nutritional meals/snacks, and a research-based curriculum. Families are offered comprehensive family support services through a research-based model.

Head Start programs are high quality, research-based programs with proven positive outcomes, notably higher educational achievement and lower incarceration rates than matched peers.

Vermont Head Start programs use state funds (i.e. – CCFAP, Act 166) to leverage federal dollars in order to serve those Vermont families most at risk. Five of the seven Head Start

programs in Vermont are dependent upon these state funds in order to have a sustainable business model.