

Statement of

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**Senate Budget Committee Hearing
Investing in our Future: The Impact of Federal Budget Decisions on Children
June 26, 2013**

Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Sessions, and Members of this Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on investing in children, and for the opportunity to be here today. I want to tell you about my journey as a parent with children who have graduated from a local Head Start Program, the Edward C. Mazique Child Center here in Washington, DC. I have one child in the program currently, and two who are Head Start graduates now thriving in elementary school. You will also hear from my daughter Sakhia, today an honor roll student at Garrison Elementary School

I found out about the Head Start program at the Edward C. Mazique Parent-Child Center through a friend of mine. I was looking for child care for my daughter, but I could not find any options that were affordable with my income. My daughter was able to get enrolled and I was able to continue working. But not everyone I know has been so lucky. Because there are so few affordable child care options in Washington, DC, there are 181 children on the waiting list – and people are turned away throughout the year. To put it in perspective, the Mazique Center serves 106 Head Start children and 166 Early Head Start children.

The program is in high demand because it is more than just a safe place for children while parents are at work—Head Start provides comprehensive child health and development to get them ready for kindergarten and lifelong learning. I could see the impact quickly. After only a few months in Head Start I saw a tremendous gain in my children’s learning skills and ability to focus. They were learning new words and the two who are Head Start graduates were both able to spell by age 4. It also helped my children build social skills. My son, for example, was a bit withdrawn at the time, but after only a few months he was playing and interacting with his classmates.

In addition, the Head Start staff demands that parents are invested in their child’s education, and have the tools at home to provide the best possible learning environment. They also helped me with developing a number of parenting and job skills like public speaking, healthy cooking, reading budgets, creating budgets, and how to best interact with my children. I’ve served on the Mazique Center’s Policy Council and I am on the National Head Start Association board. Without Head Start I wouldn’t be able to be here and speak with you today.

After graduating the Head Start program, my two older children arrived at kindergarten excited, prepared, and eager to learn. They were much better prepared than many of their classmates. Entering kindergarten already knowing how to read and write, they were also able to sit in a group and focus – something that is not easy for many of us, especially five year olds. Today, they are thriving, building on what they have learned and both still on the honor roll.

Head Start also helped to identify a developmental delay in my youngest daughter when she was very small. I was able to get speech therapy for her and the comprehensive services that she needed. Now she is also spelling her name and speaking a lot clearer than before. She will be ready for kindergarten too and I have no doubt she will one day be on the honor roll with her siblings. Without Head Start's ability to address a wide variety of needs, I do not know where my child would be today.

There are decades' worth of academic research that shows how Head Start positively impacts the lives of children and their parents. 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}

But I do not need these studies to tell me what I already know-- that Head Start has given me and my children an opportunity to build a better life, and I am so grateful for it. I hope this Committee will continue to support this investment in our children. And now, I would like to turn to my daughter, Sakhia, for her own story.

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.