

Sunset Head Start to Make Way for Better State and Local Alternatives

SAVINGS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2016-2020	2016-2025
\$887	\$1,806	\$2,711	\$3,699	\$4,800	\$5,891	\$6,979	\$8,126	\$9,207	\$10,281	\$13,903	\$54,387

Heritage Recommendation:

Sunset Head Start over 10 years. Specifically:

- Appropriate 90 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 16.
- Appropriate 80 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 17.
- Appropriate 70 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 18.
- Appropriate 60 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 19.
- Appropriate 50 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 20.
- Appropriate 40 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 21.
- Appropriate 30 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 22.
- Appropriate 20 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 23.
- Appropriate 10 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 24.
- Appropriate 0 percent of the program's FY 15 budget in FY 25.

This proposal saves \$54.4 billion over 10 years.

Rationale:

The federal Head Start program has failed to live up to its stated mission of improving kindergarten readiness for children from low-income families. In December 2012, the Department of Health and Human Services, the agency that administers Head Start, released a scientifically rigorous evaluation of more than 5,000 children participating in the program. It found that Head Start had little to no impact on cognitive skills, social-emotional well-being, health, or parenting practices of participants. Low-income families should not have to be dependent on distant, ineffective federal preschool programs.

As such, Congress should sunset the federal Head Start program over a period of 10 years. The sunset provision will provide states with adequate time to determine whether they need to provide additional state funding to subsidize day care for low-income families.

Additional Reading:

- Lindsey M. Burke and David B. Muhlhausen, "Head Start Impact Evaluation Report Finally Released," Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 3823, January 10, 2013, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/head-start-impact-evaluation-report-finally-released>.
- David B. Muhlhausen, "Head Start Program: Fraudulent and Ineffective," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2919, May 28, 2010, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2010/05/head-start-program-fraudulent-and-ineffective>.



Calculations:

Savings are expressed as budget authority and were calculated by using the FY 2015 requested spending levels as found on page 108 of Department of Health and Human Services, “Fiscal Year 2015: Budget in Brief, Strengthening Health and Opportunity for All Americans,” <http://www.hhs.gov/budget/fy2015/fy-2015-budget-in-brief.pdf>. The savings assume that current spending would continue to grow from its FY 2015 requested level at the same rate as discretionary spending over the 2016–2025 period, as specified in the most recent August 2014 CBO baseline. The alternative policy would reduce the FY 2015 level as specified. The savings represent the difference between the current and proposed policies.