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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at <http://bit.ly/2iaczvQ>.

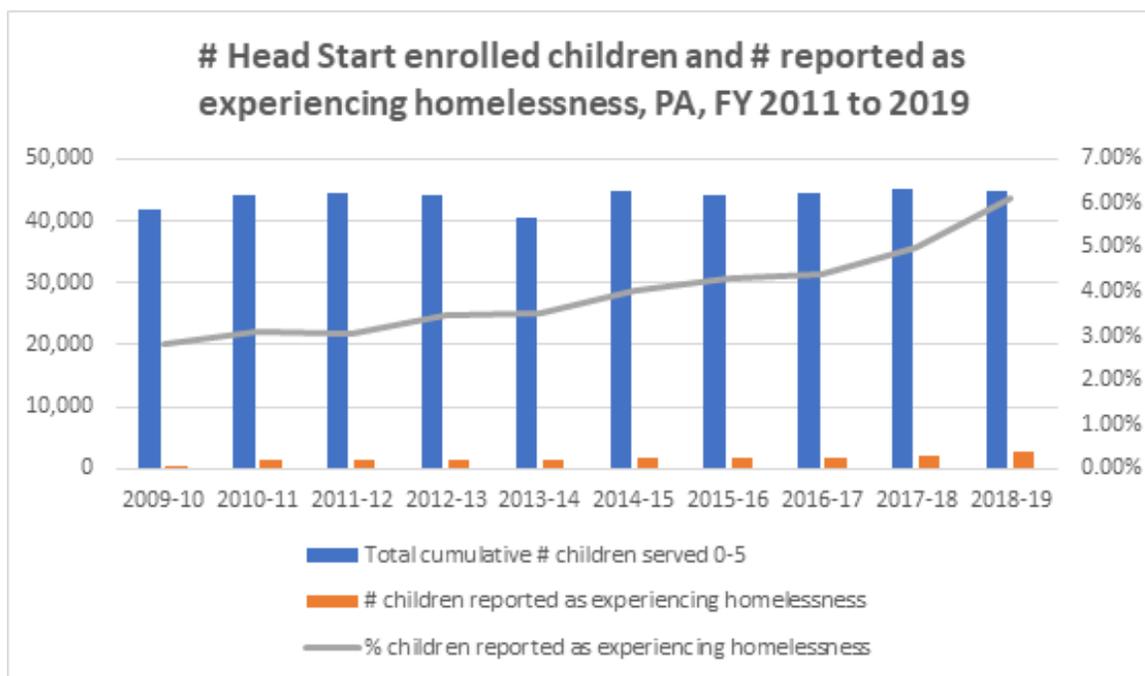
November 2020:

Pennsylvania Exceeds National Experience in Enrolling Children Experiencing Homelessness into Head Start

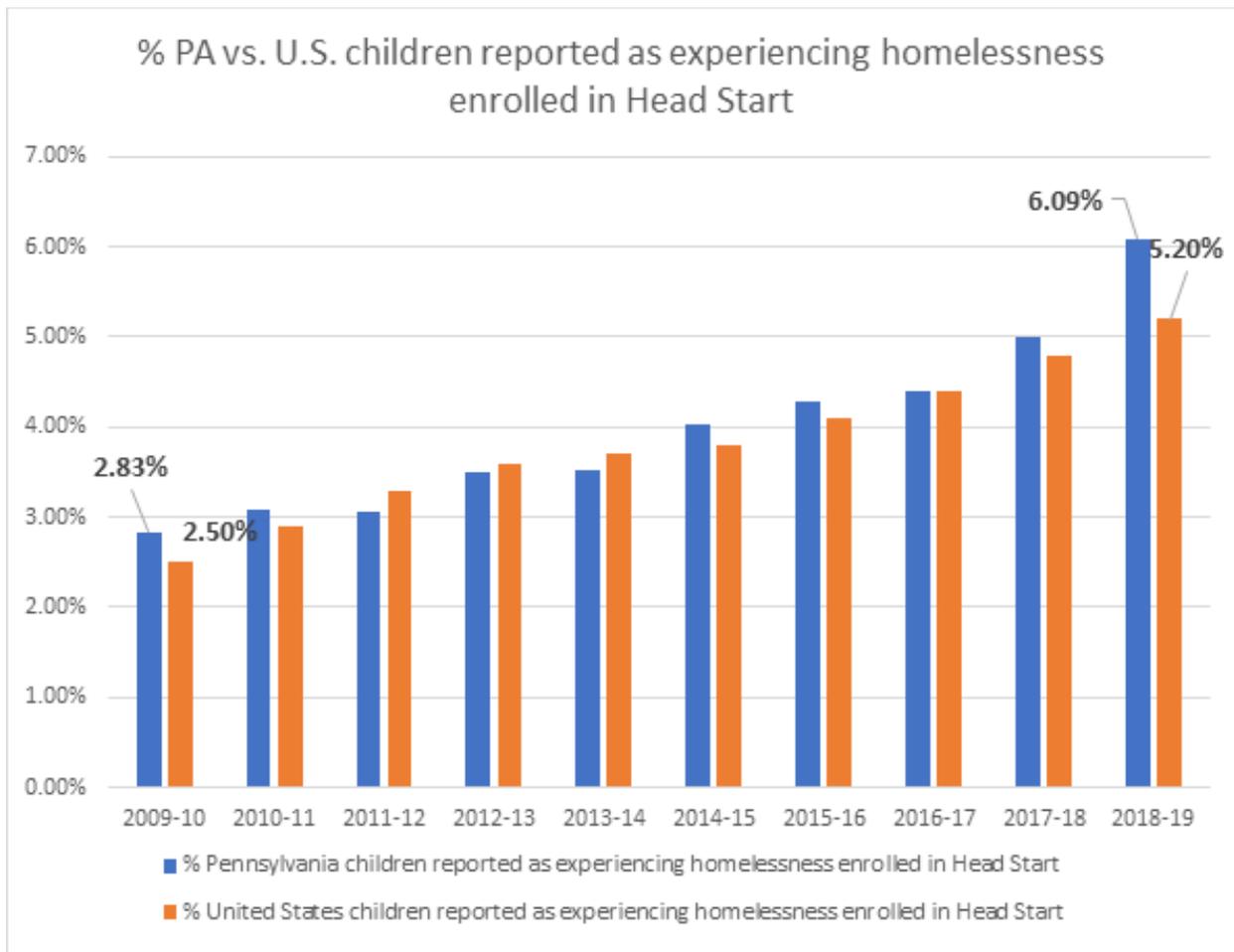
This report has good news! In these times of pandemic and strident politics, good news is a welcomed relief.

The Head Start program offers a promise to children experiencing homelessness. Providing education, health, socio-emotional support, and parenting education, Head Start prepares its children for school readiness as evidence has documented over the past forty years.

People's Emergency Center (PEC) created this paper to support advocacy aiming to convince policymakers to increase support for Head Start. This paper offers some data on the prevalence of homeless children who were enrolled into Head Start in Pennsylvania and in the five counties that make up southeastern Pennsylvania.

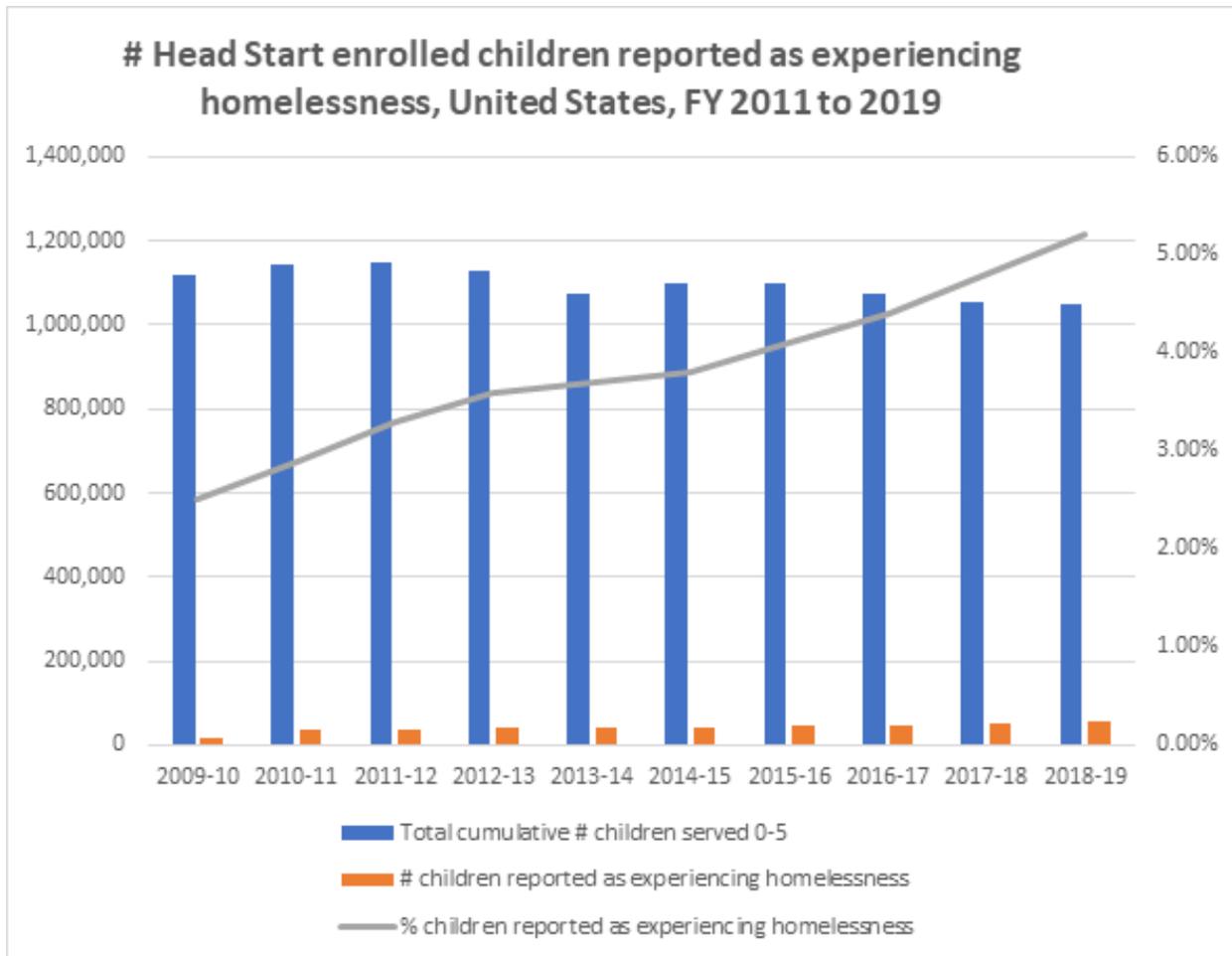


- The above chart shows that of the **44,874** children enrolled into Pennsylvania's Head Start programs in FY2019, **2,690**, were children experiencing homelessness, or **6.09%**.
- This is an increase of **49%** from 2015 when Congress approved the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA)ⁱ.
- In 2015, only **4.02%** of children enrolled in Head Start were homeless.
- Nationally (chart below), the change between 2015 and 2019 was **29%** as only **3.8%** of children enrolled in FY 2015 and **5.2%** were homeless.
- Each year, Pennsylvania **enrolls more** homeless children into Head Start.
- Since FY2017, Pennsylvania has increased the number of enrolled homeless children by one percentage point.



National Experience:

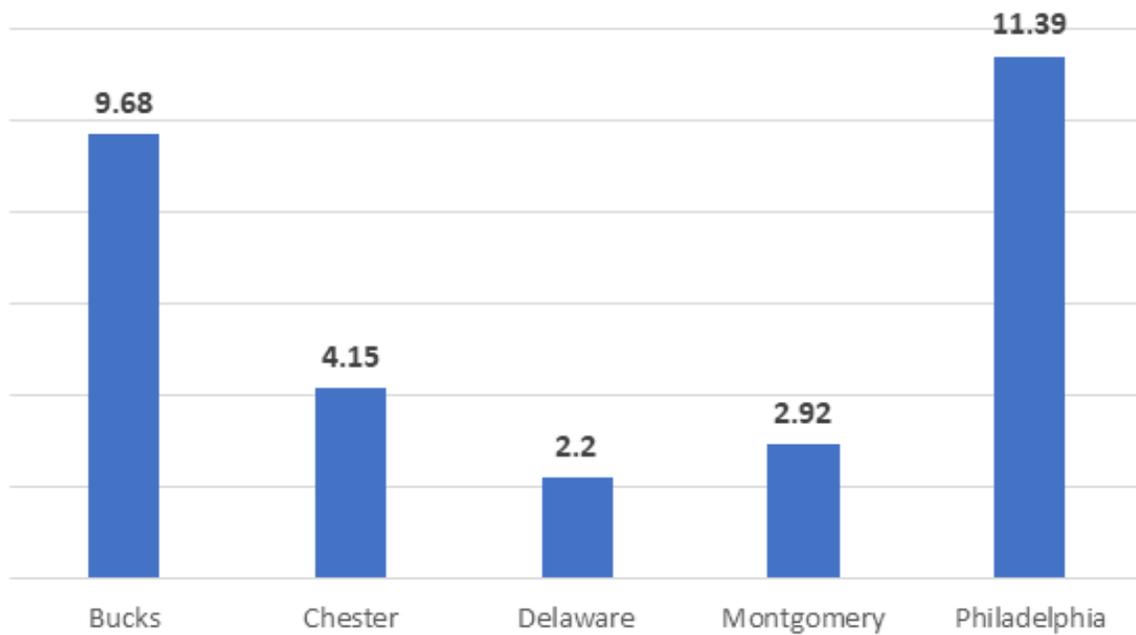
- Of the **1,047,407** children enrolled throughout the nation in FY2019, **54,395** children experienced homelessness, or **5.2%**.
- There was **29% growth** in enrollment of homeless children from FY2015 to FY2019.



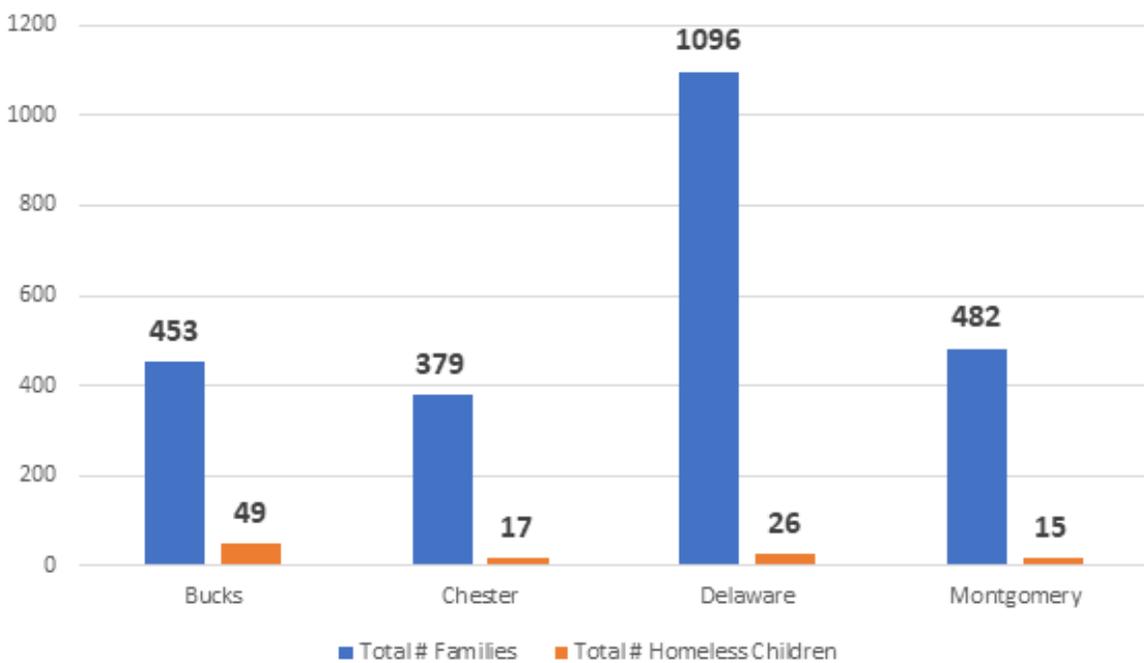
Southeastern Pennsylvania Experienceⁱⁱ:

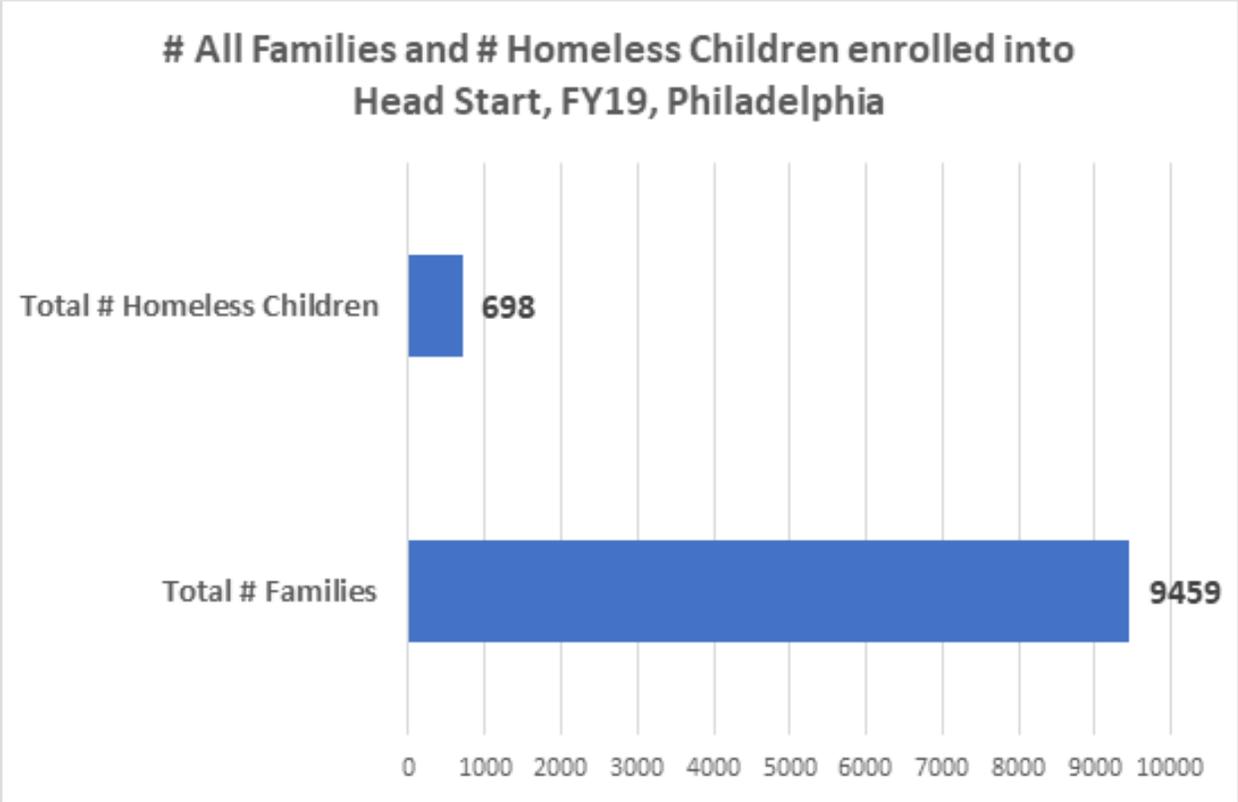
- The charts below show data specific to Southeastern Pennsylvania, i.e., Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties.
- **Highlights** include:
- Overall, there were **805** children experiencing homelessness enrolled in Head Start in FY2019.
- Delaware County has the **lowest** percentage of children experiencing homelessness enrolled in Head Start at **2.2%**.
- Chester (4.15%), Delaware (2.2%), and Montgomery (2.92%) Counties have rates **less than** the national (5.02%) and Pennsylvania (6.09%) rates.
- Bucks (9.68%) and Philadelphia (11.39%) have rates **higher than** the national (5.02%) and Pennsylvania (6.09%) rates.
- Philadelphia has the **highest** rate at **11.39%**. Please know that Philadelphia's data is based on what six providers submitted, and one agency is reporting both its Philadelphia and Montgomery county children. This may result in Montgomery county's number duplicated in the overall number.
- Bucks County has the **highest** percentage of children experiencing homelessness enrolled in Head Start of the four suburban counties at **9.68%**.

**% Homeless families Served by Head Start,
SE PA, FY 19**



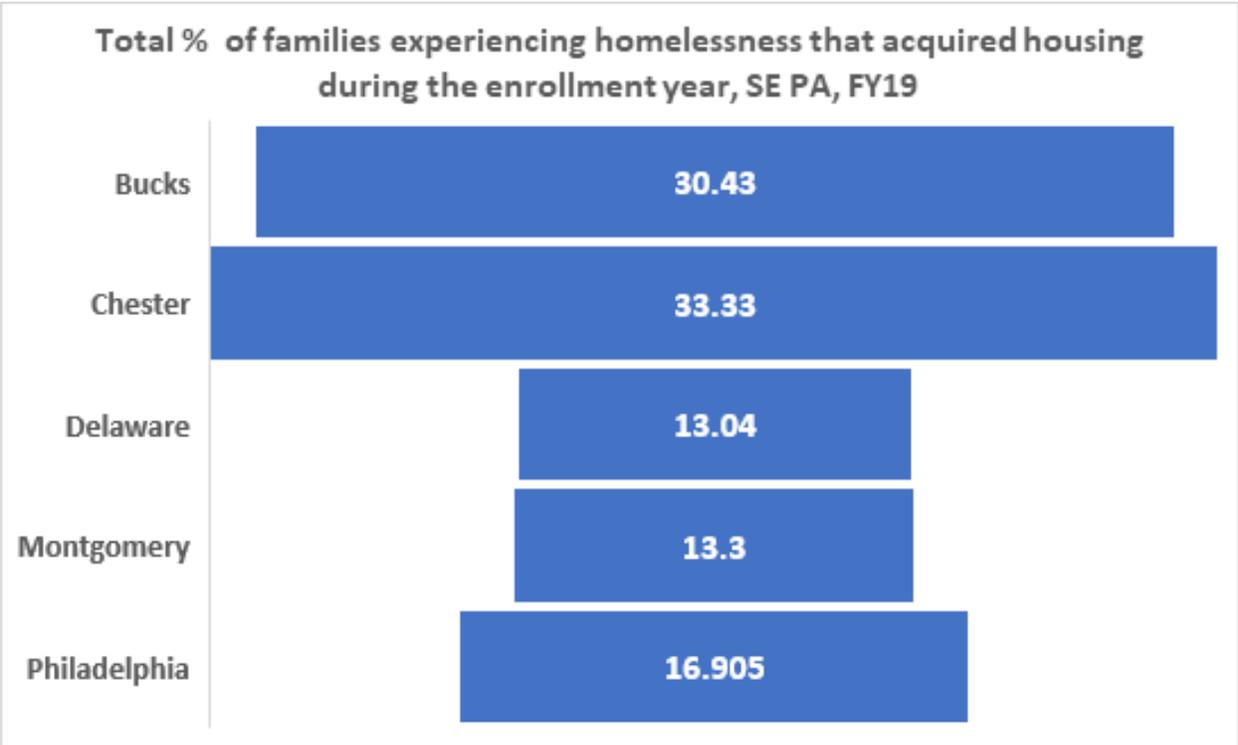
**Total # Families Served in Head Start and # Children Exp.
Homelessness, Suburban Philadelphia, FY19**





Homeless Families Accessing Housing During Head Start Enrollment

- This chart suggests that housing supports leading to **permanency** are not reaching Head Start families who experience homelessness.
- Bucks and Chester counties have the highest rates of homeless families accessing permanent housing.



Action Steps:

There are many good efforts underway to increase access to high quality early learning by young children experiencing homelessness, but these data points suggest more attention is needed. PEC manages the **Building Early Links for Learning** (BELL) project, which strives to increase access into high quality early learning programs, including home visiting, childcare, and Head Start. The six Head Start providers in the City work actively to enroll homeless children. PEC is aware of Montgomery County's '**Spout Initiative**' and efforts in Chester County. Statewide, the **PA Head Start Collaboration Office**, the **PA Office of Early Learning and Child Development**, and the **PA Head Start Association** are also leading efforts.

One resource that is needed is funding, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. To that end, PEC recommends contacting Senators Robert Casey and Patrick Toomey to demand support for the House COVID Relief package, which includes **\$1.7 billion** for Head Start.

Senator Casey:

Webform Email:

<https://www.casey.senate.gov/contact/>

Telephone: (202) 224-6324

Twitter: @SenBobCasey

Senator Toomey:

Webform Email:

<http://toomey.senate.gov/>;

Telephone: (202) 224-4254

Twitter: @SenToomey

About PEC: PEC's mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change. For families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness, PEC offers more than 235 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology classes.

About Head Start: *"Established in 1965, Head Start promotes school readiness for children in low-income families by offering educational, nutritional, health, social, and other services. In 2019, Head Start was funded to serve nearly 1 million children and pregnant women in centers, family homes, and in family childcare homes in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the nation."* (source is the national Office of Head Start's website)