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The Michigan Head Start Association just learned yesterday that the Region 5 Office of Head Start was abruptly closed and all of the federal staff were placed on administrative leave until June without any warning. No information as of now has been sent to or communicated to Head Start grantees for who will provide support and the still-existing regional offices were already understaffed.

The Region 5 Office oversees Head Start programs in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The federal employees that were terminated by the administration's DOGE are essential partners to the operations of Head Start providing services and guidance needed to efficiently run our programs. We are shocked and alarmed in consideration of the tremendous impacts this could have to our program operations and how the consequences will place vulnerable children and families at risk.

The Regional Head Start offices operate under the Office of Head Start (OHS), which is part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Their main responsibilities include grant oversight and funding distribution, program monitoring and compliance, and providing training and technical assistance. These staff are an essential part of ensuring that children and families are able to access reliable, high-quality, and fiscally sound support. Without these terminated staff, programs are worried about impacts to approving their grants, fiscal applications, applications to make their programs more responsive to their local communities, and more.

Head Start is an essential resource for over 29,000 vulnerable children and families in Michigan. For 60 years, Head Start has provided the highest quality early education and comprehensive child and family supports to children and families across the country and here in Michigan.

Robin J. Bozek
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