



# Durbin Honored By Head Start Association As Champion For Children And Families

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) was recognized today by the National Head Start Association for his continued support of Head Start and children who have experienced trauma with the PROMISE (Protecting Our Most Important Students Early) Award. This year, Durbin, along with Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and U.S. Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL-07) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI-08), introduced the [Resilience Investment, Support, and Expansion \(RISE\) from Trauma Act](#), a bipartisan bill to increase support for children who have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma, such as witnessing violence, parental addiction, or abuse.

“Too many children across Illinois face the trauma of experiencing violence, addiction, or poverty in their community, which can harm their healthy long-term development. Our legislation says that we must begin recognizing and addressing trauma earlier in young people’s lives so we can change these outcomes. Giving children a fighting chance on this Earth is our first priority, and Head Start is where we can provide our youngest with a promising foundation for success,” Durbin said.

“Head Start children and families are grateful for Senator Dick Durbin’s support and thank him for keeping the commitment to Head Start in both his words and his deeds,” said NHSA’s Executive Director Yasmina Vinci. “For 55 years, Head Start has been partnering with vulnerable children and families on their paths to success, and our impact would not be possible without the steadfast support of our long-standing allies in Congress.”

Durbin has long supported increased federal funding for Head Start and early childhood education. In Fiscal Year 2020, he helped secure a nearly \$550 million increase in Head Start funding.

Last year, Durbin passed provisions into law that created a federal task force across agencies to establish a national strategy and promote trauma best practices across federal grant programs; created a new \$50 million mental health in schools program; increased funding for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) National Child Traumatic Stress Network by \$17 million; and expanded the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program to allow clinicians to serve in schools.

NHSA's PROMISE Award honors members of the Congress who have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to Head Start and to serving our nation's most vulnerable children and their families, not only in their districts/states but across the nation. This year's PROMISE Awards have been presented to members of Congress who have led the charge in supporting Head Start's work to address childhood trauma.

Durbin received the PROMISE Award during the annual Head Start Breakfast on the Hill, where congressional champions addressed Head Start parents, alumni, and other supporters who were on Capitol Hill to advocate for the early childhood development program with members of Congress and their staff.

Nationwide, nearly 35 million children have had at least one traumatic experience, and nearly two-thirds of children have been exposed to violence. A 2013 study conducted in Chicago communities most impacted by violence found that among 15- to 17-year-olds, one in five witnessed a fatal shooting firsthand. Far too many kids carry the emotional weight of community violence and other traumatic experiences, such as the daily stress of abuse or neglect at home, a parent battling addiction, or incarceration or deportation of a loved one. Decades of research have established the link between a child's exposure to trauma, its effect on neurological and behavioral development, and long-term negative outcomes. Left unaddressed, childhood trauma can impact mental and physical well-being. In fact, studies show that individuals who have experienced six or more ACEs have a 20 year shorter average life expectancy, and those who have experienced four or more ACEs are ten times more likely to use illicit narcotics and 12 times more likely to attempt suicide. Yet only a small fraction of the children in need of support to address trauma receive such care.