**For Immediate Release**

October 5, 2026

Home Grown
123 South Broad Street, Suite 650
Philadelphia, PA 19109

**Home Grown Statement on Proposed Head Start Regulations**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** — Home Grown, a national collaborative of funders, caregivers, and providers working together to advance an inclusive child care system where home-based child care (HBCC) is visible, valued, and well-resourced, releases the following statement regarding the Administration for Children and Families's (ACF) proposed rule, *Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs* (ACF-2026-0595, RIN 0970-AD30).

For over six decades, Head Start has delivered high-quality early learning and comprehensive developmental supports to millions of children and families across the country. Head Start is one of the most significant federal funding sources for high-quality, comprehensive early childhood services for young children and their families in the United States. Throughout the program's history, family child care (FCC) providers and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers have been vital partners in the Head Start ecosystem, offering families safe, trusted, and culturally aligned environments. These partnerships expanded rapidly with the creation of Early Head Start (EHS) in the 1990s to ensure infants and toddlers had access to Head Start services, including in an FFN care setting. Today, thousands of children depend on these partnerships, including 3.5% of infant and toddler EHS slots, 9.5% of migrant and seasonal Head Start slots, and 1,286 Head Start preschool slots administered in FCC settings. These Head Start settings depend on adequate program funding and clear, evidence-based federal guidance that guarantees quality, safety, and equity, regardless of where a child lives or which care setting their family chooses.

Home Grown is deeply concerned that the proposed rule would overhaul nearly the entire Head Start program and weaken federal standards that are core to the Head Start evidence-based model while eroding the administrative infrastructure that makes home-based care participation in Head Start possible. By stripping away explicit requirements around health and safety, hours, Early Head Start home visiting and specialist supports, and dedicated regulations and protections for children with disabilities, families experiencing homelessness, and bilingual learners, the rule threatens program quality across all settings. At the same time, slashing the administrative cost cap from 15% to 5% dismantles the essential grantee supports and technical assistance that allow family child care (FCC) providers and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers to participate in Head Start and deliver comprehensive services to vulnerable children.

While we strongly support creating coherence between federal standards and state licensing systems, this must not come at the expense of quality, safety, adequate investment, and access to services for vulnerable populations. We urge the Administration for Children and Families to withdraw this proposed rule to protect early learning opportunities for all children.

## Key Recommendations Outlined in Home Grown's Public Comments:

- **Preserve Federal Standards and Create Coherence with State Licensing Frameworks:** ACF should retain evidence-based Head Start standards while aligning federal rules with state licensing to reduce administrative burden for participating Head Start Grantees and Partners without lowering program quality and fidelity.
- **Maintain Protections for Vulnerable and Special Populations:** ACF must preserve explicit standards and application flexibilities (such as self-attestation) for children experiencing homelessness, children with disabilities, and children in dual-language programs.
- **Protect Administrative and Infrastructure Funding:** ACF should maintain the 15% administrative cost cap rather than shifting unfunded operational costs onto Head Start grantees and Head Start partners, including participating FCC providers.
- **Protect Full-Day, Full-Year Service Requirements:** ACF should preserve federal regulations that prompt grantees to prioritize full-day, full-year care options that working families rely on and are often offered in FCC settings.
- **Safeguard Early Head Start Home Visiting and MIECHV Fidelity:** ACF must preserve federal standards for the Early Head Start home-based option, which serves pregnant people, new parents, and FFN caregivers. As a MIECHV-approved model, it relies on strict standards to maintain evidence-based outcomes. Eliminating these regulations and cutting costs through shorter visits, higher caseloads, and reduced staffing directly threatens service quality and model fidelity for vulnerable infants, families, and caregivers.

For more information or inquiries, contact Alexandra R. Patterson, Deputy Executive Director, at alexandra@homegrownchildcare.org.

HOME GROWN