

Denying childcare to immigrants makes a broken system worse



by **Allyx Schiavone**

August 15, 2025 @ 12:01 am



Credit: Courtesy Friends Center for Children

Earlier this month, the Trump Administration announced plans to deny immigrant families access to Head Start and Early Head Start — reversing decades of bipartisan policy and exacerbating a system that’s failing working American families.

Since its founding in 1965, Head Start has served more than 39 million children. And it has been supported by every president, Republican and Democrat alike. Choosing to deny immigrant families — including DACA recipients and families with mixed immigration statuses — is not only heartbreaking, it is a betrayal of everything the program has stood for.

As a mother, lifelong educator, and director of an early childhood program in New Haven, I see every day how essential high-quality, reliable child care is – and just how unaffordable it remains for far too many families. In Connecticut, child care often costs more than housing. Across the country, care eats up more than a quarter of household income. And, nearly 40% of parents who have reduced hours or left the workforce say the lack of affordable child care was a factor in this tough decision.

And now, by reclassifying Head Start as a “federal public benefit,” the federal government is proposing to cut off access for immigrant families – a cruel and shortsighted move that will force families to choose between working and caring for their children. That’s not a real choice. It’s an impossible bind.

And while this decision is devastating, there’s a powerful counter-story unfolding: While federal policymakers walk away from families, Connecticut is leading.

A coalition of community, early education and public sector leaders, led by [Child Care for CT](#) and chaired by [Friends Center for Children](#), for years has worked together to advocate for investments in Connecticut’s early care and education system. And this year, our state passed one of the boldest early childhood investments in the country – a \$860 million Early Childhood Education Endowment that will eliminate child care costs for families earning under \$100,000, cap costs at 7% of income for higher earners, expand access by 16,000 slots, and achieve pay parity with public school teachers for early educators for those in the state-funded system. This is what real leadership looks like: bold, compassionate, and focused on solutions that work for everyone.

If years of advocacy have taught us anything, it’s that real change takes all of us. Here in Connecticut, it’s taken a coalition of community, early education and public sector leaders to show what’s possible. But lasting progress depends on federal leaders stepping up, not stepping back.

If we let this decision stand, we make it normal to be a country where care is conditional – where a child’s future depends not on their potential, but on their paperwork. That’s not the America I believe in. – and not the country we should be building for our children.

Connecticut has proven that transformational changes, even in this moment in time, are still possible. In the face of federal retreat, we chose to lead. Now, let’s meet this moment again – with courage, compassion, and action.

Allyx Schiavone is the Executive Director of Friends Center for Children and Chair of Child Care for Connecticut.