

What the Next President Should Do With Head Start

Ben Allen, Ph.D.

Partnership for America's Economic Success
Invest in Kids Working Group Meeting
May 19, 2008



National Head Start Association

What Is Head Start?

- Head Start is the nation's premier early childhood program serving more than 1 million children and their low-income families.
- Head Start serves as a model for early childhood programs across the country.



Head Start Is a Quality Program.

- Head Start quality has been observed to be consistently good over time (Family and Child Experiences Survey, 2000).
- Head Start programs are rated as “good” using the ECERS-R (Head Start Impact Study, 2005).



Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts.

- Head Start's quality, comprehensive services ensure that Head Start provides significant educational, health, law enforcement, and economic benefits.



National Head Start Association



Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts. (Continued)

- A meta-analysis of reliable studies revealed that Head Start children have increased
 - achievement test scores and
 - favorable long-term effects on grade repetition, special education, and high school graduation rates (Barnett, 2002; Ludwig and Miller, 2007).



Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts. (Continued)

- Head Start reduced mortality rates for children aged 5- to 9-years-old from causes that could have been affected by their participation in Head Start when they were 3- and 4-years-old (Ludwig and Miller, 2007).
- Head Start benefits its children and society-at-large by reducing crime and its costs to crime victims (Fight Crime Invest In Kids, 2004; Garces, Thomas, and Currie, 2002).



Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts. (Continued)

- After reviewing the findings of Ludwig and Miller's 2007 study, Ludwig and Phillips (2007) conclude, "These impact estimates taken at face value would suggest that Head Start as it operated in the 1960s through the 1980s generated benefits in excess of program costs, with a benefit-cost ratio that might be at least as large as the 7-to-1 figure often cited for model early childhood programs such as Perry Preschool."



Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts. (Continued)

- The preliminary results of a longitudinal study of more than 600 Head Start graduates in San Bernardino County, California, showed that society receives nearly \$9 in benefits for every \$1 dollar invested in these Head Start children (Meier, 2004).
- These benefits were projected and include increased earnings, employment, and family stability, and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education.



Head Start Is a Policy Solution.

- Head Start is a comprehensive school readiness program that helps to reduce the achievement gap.
- Head Start's Policy Councils and family support services empower children and families to move out of poverty and pursue the American dream.



Underfunding of Head Start

- Small model early childhood programs received a much higher cost-per-child than Head Start programs receive from the federal government.
- For example, Perry Preschool's cost-per-child was \$15,166 (in 2000 dollars) versus Head Start's cost-per-child of \$7,500 (in 2008 dollars). The difference is more than \$7,000 per child.



Underfunding of Head Start (Continued)

- Head Start programs serve less than 40 percent of eligible children, down from about 60 percent at the beginning of the Bush administration.
- Early Head Start programs serve less than 2 percent of eligible children.
- Head Start funding relative to the number of poor children under age 5 has decreased by 22 percent between Fiscal Years 2002 and 2008.

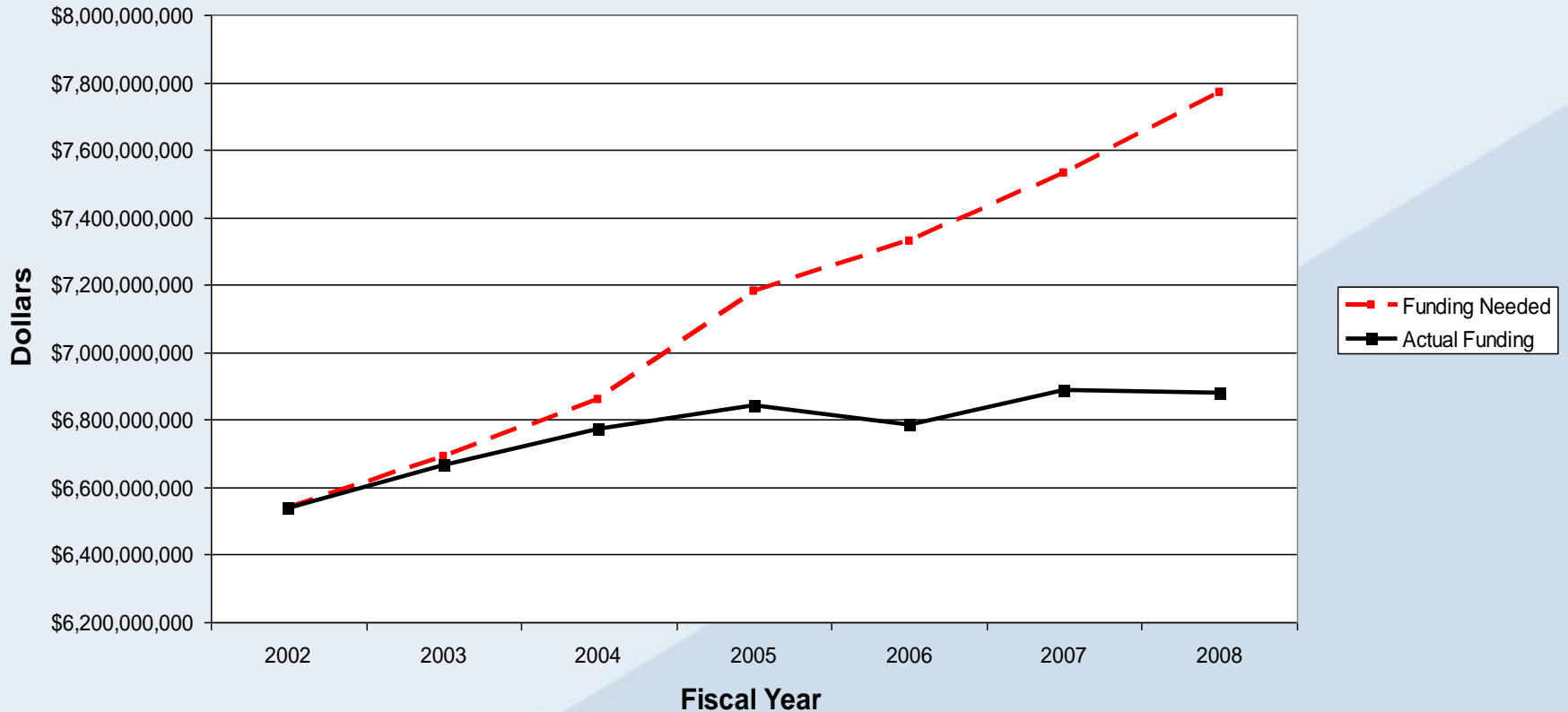


Underfunding of Head Start (Continued)

- Head Start programs received an \$11 million cut in Fiscal Year 2008.
- Adjusting for inflation, Head Start programs experienced an 11 percent real funding cut between Fiscal Years 2002 and 2008.



Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Have Experienced an 11 Percent Real Cut in Federal Funding during Fiscal Years 2002-2008



Sources: Office of Head Start, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The estimated needed funding figures for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2007 were calculated by the NHTSA Research and Evaluation Department (RED) using actual Consumer Price Index (CPI) for All Urban Consumers data from the BLS, and the estimated needed funding figure for Fiscal Year 2008 was calculated by RED using estimated CPI for All Urban Consumers data from the CBO.



National Head Start Association



Underfunding of Head Start (Continued)

- Three out of four (77 percent) Head Start directors reported in a recent survey that their programs are “at or near the breaking point” and unable to absorb a Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 budget cut and hundreds of new unfunded mandates imposed in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.



Underfunding of Head Start (Continued)

- Due to the funding cut, Head Start programs have lost teachers, had to reduce operating hours and days, cut days of operation, slashed transportation services, reduced or eliminated employee salaries and/or health benefits, and trimmed family support services.



Recommendations for the Next President

- Take steps to restore funding to make up for the recent cuts to Head Start programs, maintain the quality of Head Start programs, and expand enrollment by increasing
 - Head Start funding by \$832 million in Fiscal Year 2009 and
 - Head Start funding annually by \$360 million above the prior year's funding for Fiscal Years 2010 through 2013.



The End



National Head Start Association

