

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AS
THE AGENCY TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO SUPPORT HEAD START PROGRAMS

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

April 17, 2002

Whereas, it has come to our attention that the Administration is exploring ways to transfer the Head Start program from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Education, and

Whereas, we are aware that Head Start's success is attributable to the comprehensive services, which are already available throughout the country, under the Department of Health and Human Services and

Whereas, Head Start provides to low income children and families through the Department of Health and Human Services and its collaborative efforts, services in the areas of education, social and emotional health, physical health, family development, career development, professional development, parent involvement, community support and

Whereas, there is no precedence for this level of service for children and families under the Department of Education nor a guarantee for this level of service continuing; and

Whereas, Head Start has always recognized parents as the child's primary educator and involved parents heavily in the program in classrooms as well as in decision making capacities; while public schools have not always been welcoming places for parents nor has the governance structure always allowed parents to be part of the decision making process and

Whereas, it is not clear that the Department of Education is equipped to make changes quickly which would allow these strong attributes of the Head Start program to continue; and

Whereas, we are aware that Head Start has been integrating language, early literacy and mathematics into children's curriculum since its inception and has always striven for excellence and

Whereas, in the 1998 bipartisan agreement reauthorizing Head Start, provisions were added to augment performance standards and outcome measures, to further focus on children's language, pre-reading and numeric skills and these have been implemented in Washtenaw County and throughout the country, and

Whereas, Washtenaw County Head Start program has already exceeded the 50% requirement for teachers to have an Associate degree by 2003, as have other programs throughout the country, and

Whereas, Head Start results are demonstrably and overwhelmingly positive, according to the latest Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES). This study indicates that Head Start is already doing an outstanding job in the areas of literacy and language development, including word knowledge, letter recognition, familiarity with key book and print concepts, phonemic awareness and their readiness to learn

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby supports the Department of Health and Human Services as the agency to provide support to Head Start Programs

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners believes the Department of Health and Human Services has the capacity and experience to respond to the latest needs of the Head Start program, including strengthening early literacy, monitoring and support and continuing the journey toward excellence in services to eligible children and families and the communities from which they come and would continue to meet these needs in a fashion which the Department of Education can not.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby directs that the County Clerk forward copies of this resolution to the National Association of Counties, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. President and the remaining 82 counties in Michigan.