

Statement for House Appropriations Chair Rosa DeLauro

Head Start is the most effective early childhood development program. This is especially true for the program designed to serve migrant and seasonal agricultural workers and their families.

While I am unable to be with you today, I am writing to thank you for all you do – in the fields, in Head Start classrooms, and on Capitol Hill to educate policymakers -- and I pledge my continued support for you and your families and for the national Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program.

I appreciate and support Migrant and Seasonal Head Start as an essential part of the fabric of agricultural communities across the country. Thanks to the work of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS), some 18,000 children have a chance to learn, and grow, and flourish while their parents are working to sustain a life-giving agricultural sector, even during a severe pandemic. They deserve our gratitude, but even more, they deserve the stability and the peace of mind they have earned to continue to weather this storm.

The pandemic has created hardships for everyone, but farmworker families were hit in particularly hard and unique ways. Since you help feed the country, you were **and are** essential workers. There is no way to harvest crops remotely. Day in and day out, migrant and seasonal workers have continued with their essential work, often exposed to extreme heat, pesticides, dangerous equipment, numerous hazards, and COVID-19.

Even as MSHS centers closed at the start of pandemic, MSHS parents were expected to continue working and many did. They had no choice. They had to feed their families – as well as families throughout the country.

I also understand that your programs never stopped serving families and that MSHS programs were some of the first to reopen classrooms for in-person services so parents could return to work. I applaud your commitment.

During the pandemic, or as wildfires and searing heat ripped across swaths of the West Coast, most Americans took and continue to take for granted that the produce sections of their grocery stores would continue to be well-stocked. We must do all we can to ensure those our policymakers understand the food that they and their constituents consume originates from the hands of our farmworkers.

I want to thank the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association for bringing you together in Washington, DC and for keeping me and my colleagues in Congress engaged and informed about the work you are doing so we can support you.

With Gratitude,

Rosa DeLauro

Representative (D-CT 3rd District)

