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Contact: Jessica Reynolds
jreynolds@hstart.org
813-849-7985

Florida's Healthy Start Coalitions Applaud Florida Legislature for Protecting Funding for High Risk Pregnant Women and Babies

The following is a statement from Jane Murphy, Executive Director of Hillsborough County and President of the Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions regarding the Florida Legislature's decision to maintain funding for Florida's Healthy Start program:

"We applaud the Florida Legislature for maintaining funding for Florida's Healthy Start program. The continued funding will allow us to continue to provide essential services and community interventions to Florida's high-risk mothers and infants. Last year, Healthy Start served 7,500 at-risk mothers and infants in Hillsborough County."

In 1991, the Florida Legislature, at the urging of Governor Lawton Chiles, formed the Healthy Start Coalitions as a public-private partnership. Coalitions are responsible for developing and maintaining a system of care for pregnant women and babies in each community. Coalitions form partnerships for with hospitals, obstetricians, County Health Departments and other nonprofits and programs to have collective impact on birth outcomes.

Since it was established, Healthy Start has helped Florida make significant strides in increasing positive birth outcomes and reducing infant mortality by 35 percent. Our work is essential and far from complete, and this funding will allow our efforts to continue to make a positive impact on infant mortality, prematurity and healthy child development.

Healthy Start is currently working with the Florida Department of Health and Agency for Health Care Administration to develop a new care delivery structure that will reach into each community to increase our impact in helping Florida's highest-risk mothers and babies and further ensure our services are providing the highest return on investment.

We thank the Florida Legislature for recognizing the value in investing in the health of our state's most vulnerable families and helping us continue on this positive path of success.

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About The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions

The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions develops and supports local systems of care to optimize the health of moms, babies and families. The Association is made up of 32 individual coalitions from across the state. Each coalition uses data and research to design a service delivery plan unique to their community. Together, we unite to have a collective impact toward better outcomes for Florida's families.

To learn more, visit www.fahsc.org.