PHSA Advocacy Engagement Strategy 2.0
The PHSA Program Liaison Project

PHSA Vision Statement
The Pennsylvania Head Start Association creates ONE CLEAR, POWERFUL VOICE for children and families who are economically challenged. We embrace diversity and unify the early childhood community by being a responsive, thriving organization, leading the charge for training, information sharing, advocacy and comprehensive services.

PHSA Mission Statement
The Pennsylvania Head Start Association’s purpose is to maximize the cumulative talents of Early Head Start/Head Start parents, staff, administrators and friends to collectively improve the future for economically challenged children, families and communities, by providing quality leadership, training, information and advocacy at the local, state, regional and national levels.

Development of the PHSA Advocacy Engagement Strategy
At the 2017 Annual PHSA Membership Meeting held during the PHSA Conference, the PHSA Board presented the Association’s broad strategic plan and reviewed the current environment that programs were operating in. Stumbling blocks at the state and federal levels level, posed a direct threat to the ongoing support of Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts. Though we continued to have unprecedented bipartisan support, others recommended everything from block granting to the steady defunding of the program proposed in the Heritage Blueprint. These concerns were exacerbated by the fact that they co-existed with ongoing questions about the health of our economy. Given those issues, the board chose to focus on the engagement of its members to create public will for Head Start/Early Head Start and grow a vibrant community of advocates with the goal of projecting one clear, powerful voice for Head Start/Early Head Start in Pennsylvania.

Part of the advocacy strategy is our involvement in the Pre-K for PA Campaign, the Childhood Begins at Home which focuses on Home Visiting, and the Start Strong PA Campaign which focuses on child care services. Since the Pre-K for PA campaign was launched in 2014, it has grown to over 25,000 grassroots advocates working tirelessly to make pre-k a priority issue gubernatorial and legislative elections, advocating for increased access to high-quality pre-kindergarten. In February, Governor Wolf proposed budget increases in pre-k funding (Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental), as well as increased support for home visiting and high-quality child care services. The campaigns are now working hard to encourage legislators to support these increases and pass the proposed budget in June.

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It is imperative to PHSA and to Head Start/Early Head Start programs in Pennsylvania that we continue to develop a systematic advocacy network that is able to respond quickly when issues arise. The PHSA Board and staff feel strongly that all programs must make a commitment to educating the general public and more specifically, legislators, about the positive impacts of their program on children, families and their community. The Board continues to challenge all program directors to actively engage and commit to: Identifying a Liaison within your program and
working with your Liaison to develop a plan to engage your program’s staff and parents to join PHSA’s email list, sign on as members of the Campaigns we are engaged in, and work with PHSA as advocates for Head Start/Early Head Start at the local, state and federal level. Liaisons will help program staff and parents understand the vital role that advocacy plays for Head Start/Early Head Start, and be positioned to quickly mobilize them within their program when needed.

As always, we thank you for your commitment to your program and the families that you serve and we know that with your participation, our Advocacy Engagement Strategy will continue to be successful.