

# THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

## INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

October 3, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
United States House of Representatives  
2486 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

We, the undersigned members of the Children's Budget Coalition, write to urge you to prioritize children and families while negotiating the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 302(b) allocations to provide adequate funding for programs that benefit our nation's youth. The Children's Budget Coalition is comprised of over 80 child-focused organizations who collectively advocate to ensure that our nation's policymakers prioritize children in federal budget decisions and the annual appropriations process.

While much of spending on adults is mandatory, spending on children is disproportionately discretionary.<sup>1</sup> This means that the annual appropriations process has an immense impact on programs supporting children and families, and therefore interruptions in the process or inadequate annual funding harms children disproportionately. Such serious concerns underscore the importance of prioritizing our children in spending decisions to ensure they can overcome the many, difficult challenges facing them. Just last week, data from the US Census confirmed that child poverty remains high with a rate of 16.2 percent, and that children are far more likely to experience poverty than adults.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the share of federal spending on children has declined to an all-time low of just 7.21 percent – a near 10 percent decline since FY 2015.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, spending on children is not keeping pace with inflation, which means that between FY 2018 and FY 2019, total spending on children experienced an inflation-adjusted cut of nearly 1 percent.<sup>3</sup> Without immediate congressional action to reverse these trends, funding for critical children's services and programs will continue to lose ground, and we will struggle to provide our nation's children with the resources they need to thrive and succeed.

<sup>1</sup> "Budgeting for the Next Generation: Does the Budget Process Prioritize Children?" *Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget*. 16 August 2018. [http://www.crfb.org/sites/default/files/Does\\_The\\_Budget\\_Process\\_Prioritize\\_Children.pdf](http://www.crfb.org/sites/default/files/Does_The_Budget_Process_Prioritize_Children.pdf). Accessed 18 September 2019.

<sup>2</sup> "Key Takeaways from Children's Budget 2019," *First Focus on Children*. 10 September 2019. <https://firstfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Takeaways-from-Childrens-Budget-2019.pdf>. Accessed 18 September 2019.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

In the coming days and weeks, we urge you to reverse this downward spending trend while reconciling the 302(b) allocations passed in the House and proposed in the Senate for FY 2020 appropriations bills. Four bills in particular – Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-H), Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD), Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS), and Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration (Ag-FDA) – are of utmost importance to children and families, as they together accounted for 98.82 percent of Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) spending on children in FY 2019. That being said, we support the allocations offered in the House for the Labor-H, T-HUD, and Ag-FDA bills and those offered in the Senate for the CJS bill, as all of these bills provide higher funding levels than their counterparts in the other chamber.

Furthermore, we urge Congress to pass appropriations bills promptly to avoid continuing resolutions and another devastating government shutdown. The historic government shutdown experienced last January seriously harmed the economic security, health, and well-being of low-income children and families who participate in vital government programs, and another shutdown must be avoided so critical federal services for our children are not jeopardized. Similarly, the recent pattern of multiple stopgap funding measures has created unpredictable and inadequate program funding that fails to keep pace with inflation and inhibits agencies from planning ahead to address the pressing needs of our children and families.

The members of the Children’s Budget Coalition recognize the importance of using a comprehensive approach to prioritizing children in federal spending decisions. This relies heavily on adequate 302(b) allocations for those subcommittees contributing the vast majority of NDD spending on children. The coming negotiations represent a meaningful opportunity for Congress to reverse the unfortunate trends of spending on children, elevate them as a priority in budget decisions, and we stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Afterschool Alliance

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

American Academy of Pediatrics

Campaign for Youth Justice

Child Care Aware of America

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Advocacy Institute

Children's Aid

Children's Health Fund

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

City Year Inc.

Coalition on Human Needs

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Committee for Children

Communities in Schools National Office

Early Care and Education Consortium

First Focus Campaign for Children

Foster Family Treatment Association

Futures Without Violence

Jumpstart

March of Dimes  
Mental Health America  
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership  
MomsRising  
Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health  
National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)  
National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Child Care Association  
National Diaper Bank Network  
National Early Childhood Program Accreditation  
National Education Association  
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform  
National Head Start Association  
National Network for Youth  
National Respite Coalition  
National WIC Association  
National Writing Project  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Partnership for America's Children  
Policy & Performance Consultants, Inc.  
Prevent Blindness  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Save the Children Action Network  
SchoolHouse Connection  
United Way Worldwide  
Voice for Adoption  
YMCA of the USA  
Youth Villages