

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

November 16, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair DeLauro, Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Granger and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you continue work to complete the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) annual spending bills, the undersigned organizations urge you to prioritize kids by supporting increased funding for non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs at least at the House of Representatives FY23 recommended levels and swiftly pass the FY23 annual spending bills before the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on December 16, 2022. Congress faces a pivotal moment now and can act to ensure that the success of pandemic-fueled, increased spending on children's healthy development and well-being across a broad landscape of investment areas – including early childhood, child protection and justice, education, health, housing, income support, nutrition, training, safety and more – is not squandered by returning to the many years of disinvestment in our children and grandchildren's support programs and services. We strongly urge Congress to apply the lessons learned during the pandemic and increase funding for our children as we know those investments result in significant and positive near-term outcomes – nearly cutting child poverty in half in 2021 and [narrowing the racial poverty gap for Black and Hispanic children](#) – and help set them up for a successful future.

As members of the [Children's Budget Coalition](#), comprised of over 80 child and family organizations who collectively advocate for children to be a priority in federal budget decisions, we specifically ask that you:

- Provide a robust topline funding level for NDD spending in FY23 at least at the House-recommended level and prioritize increased allocations to subcommittees with jurisdiction over child-related programs and services,
- Provide funding for the VA Medical Care program outside the topline NDD number - estimated by the Biden Administration to require more than a twenty percent increase for FY23 - to allow for other vital funding increases benefitting kids and families,
- Pass the FY23 spending bills before the current stopgap funding measure expires and avoid additional CRs with flat-funding. CRs harm children as they typically fund programs at the same level as the prior year, effectively cutting programs and services when too many families continue to struggle to make ends meet.

Now, inflationary pressures make increased support even more urgent to help keep pace with rising costs and respond to the mounting needs of children everywhere:

- [Since the Child Tax Credit expired in January 2022](#), we have seen child poverty spike plunging nearly 4 million children back into poverty including over 1.3 million Hispanic children and over 660,000 Black children.
- [6.2 percent](#) of U.S. households with children were food insecure in 2021.
- [The youth unemployment rate \(ages 16-19\) for September 2022](#) was 11.3%, compared to a 4.7% overall unemployment rate.
- From late [September Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey week #49](#):
 - Over 14 million adults with children in the household reported a loss of employment in last 4 weeks,
 - Nearly 3 million 18-24 year olds reported a lost of employment in last 4 weeks,
 - Over 11 million households with children reported not having enough to eat at some point in the last 7 days,
 - Nearly 3 million children were not eating enough food because often the food was unaffordable,
 - 45% of reported households with children expressed they were very or somewhat likely to leave their house in next 2 months due to eviction, and
 - 64.4 million households with children had some level of difficulty paying usual household expenses in the last 7 days.
- Of the [3.9 million children](#) who did not have health insurance in 2021, 8.6% are Hispanic, 4.6% are Asian, and 4.3% are Black.
- Of the more than [5 million children](#) who are likely to lose their Medicaid coverage after the pandemic, nearly one-third of them will be Latino and 15 percent will be Black.
- Cases of pediatric RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) are [surging](#), with many hospitals at capacity.
- There is an alarming — and growing — [shortage of children’s hospital beds](#), even in children’s hospitals.
- There has been an alarming [decline in routine childhood vaccinations](#), fueled by disinformation and pandemic-era delays, and a simultaneous [rise in long-dormant diseases such as polio](#).
- 11.8% of children ages 3-17 experienced anxiety or depression in 2020, a 25.5% increase from 2016.
- Just [26% of eighth grade students are proficient in math](#), a decline from 34% three years ago.
- In low- and middle-income countries, COVID school closures have left [70% of ten-year-old children](#) unable to read.
- 16 million [K-12 students did not have adequate Internet connectivity](#) to teach and learn from home in 2020.
- 24.6 million school-age children do not have access to an afterschool program nearby.
- [About one-third of teachers and principals reported that they were likely to leave their current job by the end of the 2021-22 school year](#), up from about one quarter of teachers and 15 percent of principals in January 2021.
- Only 2 states have a school nurse in every building as recommended by the [National Association of School Nurses](#) and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- [Preschool enrollment declined by 18%](#), the first decrease in preschool enrollment in two decades.
- Only 15% [of the 12.8 million children federally eligible for child care subsidies](#) received them.
- [Since February 2020, the childcare workforce has lost 88,000 jobs](#), or 8.4% of its pre-pandemic workforce, and it is recovering slower than other sectors.
- 20% of [young adults who experience the child welfare system are estimated to become homeless](#) the moment they are emancipated at the age of 18.
- 50% is the estimated percent of the [homeless population who spent time in foster care](#).
- [80% of the world’s children](#) fear sexual abuse or exploitation online.
- 3.3 million is the estimated [number of homes with children less than 6 years of age that have one or more lead based paint hazards](#); this includes 2.1 million low income households (<\$35,000/yr).
- Almost every child on earth — [more than 99%](#) — is exposed to at least one major climate and environmental hazard, shock, or stress.

The investments and policy improvements authorized in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) turned around the extremely troubling downward spending trend on children and helped to address many of the issues outlined in the

startling statistics above. The convergence of terrific Champions for Children in Congress, a global pandemic, and the elevation of the alarming needs of our children resulted in an [unprecedented share of spending for children in the federal budget](#) in FY22. Analysis by First Focus on Children found that the federal share of spending dedicated to children in FY22 reached a record 11.98% after dropping to just 7.55% in FY 2020, the lowest level since its work began on the Children’s Budget in 2006. Children continue to reap the benefits of increased funding in response to the pandemic, but lawmakers have begun paring back these investments and are on track to reverse the progress made. For instance, from FY 2021 to FY 2022, funding for children in inflation-adjusted dollars dropped more than 17% and almost half of the investment areas tracked saw decreases since FY17 including early childhood, children’s health, children’s housing and youth training.

The health and well-being of our children had been in crisis for years before COVID-19 shocked the country’s health and economy. The unprecedented level of investment in our nation’s children in FY22 showed what we can achieve when we prioritize our kids. The increased share of federal spending on children has been game-changing, driving a [46% reduction in child poverty in 2021](#), the largest year-to-year reduction on record of child poverty; leading to remarkable declines in child hunger; and dropping the rate of children without health insurance. The pandemic is receding, but the emergency of our children’s well-being is not. Families still grapple with safely returning to the office and school; addressing mental health needs; ensuring they can meet food, housing, and living expenses; securing child care and more. As our nation navigates the ongoing recovery and new challenges, we are reminded that an immense amount of work remains to support and protect our children.

Investing in our children sets them up to thrive and when our youngest have the support to reach their full potential, our families, communities, and economy benefit. [The 2019 landmark study by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine](#) estimates that child poverty costs our country nearly \$1 trillion annually, but its research further shows that reducing child poverty not only has direct benefits on individual children’s healthy development, but also delivers a significant return on investment. If we turn away from ambitious goals for our kids and grandkids and head in the direction of “back to normal,” the result could be a dramatic reduction in the federal share of investments in children and a return to rising rates of child poverty, uninsurance, homelessness, and hunger, further compounded by an increase in the number of kids living in high-stress and under-resourced households.

The pandemic and its economic fallout revealed decades of delayed maintenance on the systems that create the foundation for children to reach their full potential. When Congress prioritizes children we know there are positive outcomes, and we saw the success of those investments during the response to the public health crisis. Reverting back to disinvestment in our children and grandchildren will have dramatic, negative consequences, and they deserve better. We urge you to build off the recent pandemic-fueled investments in our kids and prioritize their needs and future as you make critically important FY23 spending decisions.

Sincerely,

First Focus Campaign for Children

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

American Academy of Pediatrics

Association of Children's Residential & Community services (ACRC)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

California Child Care Resource & Referral Network

Chiefs for Change

Child Care Aware of America

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Health Fund

Children's Hospital Association

City Year, Inc.

Colorado Children's Campaign

Early Care & Education Consortium

Educare Learning Network

Family Centered Treatment Foundation

Family Focused Treatment Association

Futures Without Violence

Healthy Teen Network

Institute for Educational Leadership

Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud

John Burton Advocates for Youth

Los Angeles Trade Technical College

MENTOR

National Association for Family Child Care

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of School Nurses

National Center for Healthy Housing

National Child Care Association

National Diaper Bank Network

National Indian Child Care Association

National League for Nursing

National Network for Youth, Inc.

National Respite Coalition

National WIC Association

National Women's Law Center (NWLC)

Organizations Concerned about Rural Education (OCRE)

Prevent Blindness

Prevent Child Abuse America

Prosperity Now

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Raising Illinois Prenatal-to-Three Coalition

Roots and Wings Preschool and Child Care

Save the Children

School Nutrition Association

SchoolHouse Connection

Start Early

TOOTRIS Child Care On-Demand

West Central Initiative

YMCA of the USA

Youth Villages

ZERO TO THREE