

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

June 8, 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. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

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

As you work to complete the FY2023 appropriations process, the undersigned groups are writing to urge you to prioritize children in your annual spending decisions and call your attention to the unique and growing needs of children as much uncertainty remains about the pandemic and our economic recovery. The global pandemic and economic recession negatively impacted every aspect of the lives of children, and for the poorest children and families among us, this has been particularly true. Even before the public health and economic crises, kids were faring poorly and the federal investment in programs and services benefiting them was declining. After two decades of a decreasing share of federal spending on children, [it took a public health emergency](#) to push the share of federal spending on children to 11% — a historic high after a record low share of 7.6% for kids in FY2020.

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 thank you for your leadership on Covid-19 investments and policy improvements authorized in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) across numerous areas of concern, and combined, turned around the extremely troubling downward spending trend on children. Emergency pandemic aid from the ARP and other pandemic legislation provided increased food benefits, economic impact payments, housing support, child care investments, education resources, tax improvements, and other child-centered initiatives. All together these additional resources and policy improvements achieved [historic levels of well-being for U.S. children](#). Analysts from Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan have found that [federal pandemic assistance helped close the persistent gap in material hardship for U.S. families with children](#) and that the advances stuck even in the face of rising inflation.

The ARP investments and policy changes are projected to significantly decrease child poverty — [cutting it by 56%](#) — already we have seen a substantial [drop in child poverty in 2021](#). The Covid-19 aid also reduced food insufficiency in households with children by [seven percentage points](#) and provided our education system with increased resources to better the nation's schools, tackle the learning gap, shrink the digital divide, and support teachers and other school officials on the frontlines addressing the unprecedented challenges and tragedies our country's children and young people are facing. Yet children were still the poorest group in the nation in 2020 and our country continues to

experience significant racial and economic disparities. [The January expiration of the improved Child Tax Credit alone has plunged nearly 4 million children back into poverty](#), including 1.3 million Hispanic children and over 660,000 Black children. [Food insecurity also has increased by 12% in households with children and experts predict that students in high-poverty districts with much more remote learning will lose ground academically, widening measures of our nation's racial and economic achievement gaps.](#)

As you know, funding for programs that benefit children and families is disproportionately discretionary and comes from a wide array of federal programs that exist in the jurisdiction of multiple appropriations subcommittees, but work together to support and protect our nation's children. We thank you for the increased funding for a number of programs critically important to the health, safety and well-being of children included in the FY2022 omnibus. Now, we are deeply concerned that the FY2023 spending decisions will shortchange children as many competing initiatives and interests loom large. In your leadership roles on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, we urge you to work together to ensure that our children's diverse and complex needs are met through a comprehensive approach that results in robust investments and offers innovative solutions and delivery of services as households with children remain the hardest hit by the pandemic and its economic fallout.

From all available research, we know that the harmful effects of rising child poverty for this generation of children will be far-reaching. According to a number of [studies extensively cited by the NASEM report](#), child poverty negatively impacts child physical and mental health, education, child hunger, child homelessness, and child abuse rates, and has extensive adverse consequences well into adulthood. The NASEM report also points out that there is no one policy change to end child poverty, but instead we need a host of policy improvements and increased investments to provide for basic needs such as food, housing, child care, healthcare, education, foster care and other supports to enable our children's healthy development and ability to reach their full potential. Our lessons learned during the pandemic confirm the need for increased investments in our children and a comprehensive policy approach to ensure every child has what they need to grow up healthy and safe.

Specifically, we ask that you:

- **Increase topline spending for non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending in FY2023 over FY2022.**
- **Provide robust allocations for four subcommittees [with jurisdiction over nearly 99% of child-related programs and services](#):**
 1. Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
 2. Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies
 3. Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
 4. Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
- **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 FY 2023 – to allow for other vital funding increases.

The negative and alarming impacts Covid-19 and its economic fallout have had on children are **not behind us**, and in fact our children's pressing needs are right in front of us and intensifying:

- **13 million:** [The number of U.S. children who have contracted childhood COVID.](#)
- **19 %:** The [amount of all COVID-19](#) cases that are in children - despite early misconceptions that children don't get COVID.
- **1,484:** Number of [children who have died](#) in the United States with childhood COVID.
- **251,000:** The amount of children [who have lost a caregiver](#) due to COVID-19.
- **3,936:** The [number of known Covid-19 cases for youth in juvenile facilities](#) as of March 31.
- **19 million:** Total number of [U.S. children under 5](#), for whom there is still no vaccine.
- **13:** Where COVID-19 ranks among the [top 15 causes of death](#) in U.S. children.
- **6.7 million:** Number of children expected to [lose health coverage](#) in the United States when the Public Health Emergency ends.
- **100%:** The CDC finds that child body mass index rates [nearly doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), putting more kids at risk for poor health.
- **3.7 million:** The number of [U.S. children who slid back into poverty](#) when improvements to the child tax credit expired.
- **1-in-6:** The number of U.S. children who experienced [food insecurity](#) last year.
- **10.4%:** The [youth unemployment rate \(ages 16-19\) for May 2022](#) compared to a 3.6% overall unemployment rate.
- **25%:** [One in four teachers was considering quitting at the end of the 2020-21 school year](#), according to a RAND survey.
- **44%:** Number of [public schools reported having at least one teaching vacancy](#) as of January 2022.
- **51%:** [Number of those vacancies accounted for by resignations.](#)
- **11.7%:** Percent of jobs in the child care sector, made up overwhelmingly of women and disproportionately women of color, [that have been lost](#) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **18%:** [Preschool enrollment decline](#), the first decrease in preschool enrollment in two decades.
- **29%:** Percent of 4-year-olds and 5% of 3-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, a substantial decrease from pre-pandemic levels, erasing a decade of growth in preschool enrollment.
- **11%:** [Percent of eligible infants and toddlers](#) who were served by Early Head Start.
- **15%:** [Percent of the 12.8 million children federally eligible for child care subsidies](#) who received them.
- **24.6 million:** the number of school-age children who want to attend an afterschool program but don't have access to a program nearby.
- **31%:** Percentage increase in [mental health-related emergency room visits](#) in the U.S. by 12-17-year-olds in 2020.
- **2:** Where [suicide ranks](#) among the top causes of death in the United States for individuals between the ages of 10-24.
- **0:** The number of states that meet the [recommended ratio of one social worker for every 250 students.](#)
- **2:** The number of states that have a school nurse in every building as recommended by the [National Association of School Nurses](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics.](#)
- **4,000+:** The number of [students served by a single school psychologist](#) in West Virginia, Missouri, Texas, Alaska, and Georgia.
- **3 million:** The number of marginalized K-12 students — those with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, in foster care or who are migrants — who [stopped attending school.](#)
- **9.6 million:** Number of children enrolled in public or private school who had no contact with teachers in the last 7 days from March 30-April 11.
- **16 million:** [Number of K-12 students who did not have adequate Internet connectivity](#) to teach and learn from home in 2020.

- **3.3 million:** [estimated number of homes with children less than 6 years of age have one or more lead based paint hazards](#); this includes 2.1 million low income households (< \$35,000/yr).
- **22%:** Percentage of U.S. households with children who are [behind on rent](#).
- **3 Million:** Number of households with children or roughly 14% of those reporting who are [not at all confident they can pay next month's rent](#).
- **36%:** Percent of households with children reported being [very likely or somewhat likely to leave their current home in the next two months due to evictions](#).
- **20%:** The estimated percent of young adults who experience the [child welfare system become homeless the moment they are emancipated at the age of 18](#).
- **50%:** The estimated [homeless population who spent time in foster care](#).
- **44%:** The percentage of [runaway or homeless youth who had stayed in jail, prison, or juvenile detention centers](#).
- **40%:** Percent of the households with children responding [who found it very or somewhat difficult to pay for usual household expenses in the last 7 days](#).
- Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and other children of color in the United States are far more likely to contract childhood COVID, be hospitalized, lose a caregiver to the disease, suffer economic consequences, and endure other pandemic fallout than their white counterparts:
 - **65%:** Percentage of U.S. children [who lost a caregiver to COVID](#) who belong to racial and ethnic minorities.
 - **2x:** The likelihood of [Black or Hispanic children losing a caregiver](#) to COVID, v. white children.
 - **4.5x:** The likelihood of [American Indian/Alaska Native children losing a caregiver](#) to COVID, v. white children.
 - **29%:** Percentage of [Black renters with children who are behind on rent](#), v. 22% for all U.S. renters with children.
 - **3x:** The rate of [food insecurity among Black and Hispanic](#) households v. white households.
 - **70%:** The percentage of total [U.S. MISC cases that occurred in children who are Black or Hispanic](#).
- **5.4%:** The net undercount of young children (ages birth to 4) in the 2020 Census, the highest rate since tracking began in the 1950 census. The recent release of Demographic Analysis data shows that the net undercount of young children in 2020 was even larger than in 2010, and young Hispanic and Black children were missed at more than double the rate of White children. Census data is used to allocate \$1.5 trillion a year, affecting numerous programs benefitting kids.

The FY2023 appropriations process is an opportunity to elevate children's issues as the hardships of the pandemic continue to be strongest for families with children who were already struggling to meet financial obligations, with communities of color bearing the brunt of this hardship. We urge you to keep the unique and growing needs of children at the forefront as you make tough and significant budget and policy decisions in the coming weeks and months, provide robust 302(b) allocations to key subcommittees with jurisdiction over many programs supporting kids and families, and fund the VA Medical Care program outside the NDD category.

Every child deserves to have the opportunity, knowledge, skills, and ability to meet the challenges in an ever-changing world and succeed individually and as future decision-makers in our society. We look forward to working with you to forge a path for our children that addresses their best interests and provides them with the access to resources so very critical to their every day and long-term well-being, healthy development, and economic security.

Sincerely,

First Focus Campaign for Children
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Afterschool Alliance
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers
Association of Children's Residential & Community Services (ACRC)
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Health Fund
Children's Hospital Association
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Child Welfare League of America
Early Care & Education Consortium
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
The Family Focused Treatment Association
Families USA
Foster Care Alumni of America
Foster Kinship
Foster Success
Futures Without Violence
Healthy Teen Network
Institute for Child Success
Institute for Educational Leadership
John Burton Advocates for Youth
MENTOR National
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Diaper Bank Network
National Respite Coalition
National WIC Association
Organizations Concerned About Rural Education
Our Children Oregon
Partnership for America's Children
Prevent Blindness
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Save the Children
School Nutrition Association

Share Our Strength
Voices for Vermont's Children
YMCA of the USA
Youth Villages
ZERO TO THREE