

March 16, 2017

Dear Members of Congress,

The undersigned organizations committed to improving the lives of our nation's babies, toddlers, children, youth and families, are writing to urge you to protect them, and the programs that help them, as you work through the Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018 budget and appropriations process.

We specifically ask that you:

- **Undo the sequester for FY 2017 and FY 2018 to non-defense domestic discretionary programs to protect services that help children and their families. Recognizing that domestic discretionary programs have suffered substantial cuts since 2010, Congress has committed to undo cuts for domestic and defense appropriation equally. We strongly urge that you honor that commitment, to prevent further weakening of our nation's capacity to meet our children's needs.**
- **Protect important programs, including the Affordable Care Act, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child nutrition programs, Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) from harmful changes to their structure and financing, including through per capita caps, block grants, or other program modifications, which would negatively impact children. We also strongly urge you to oppose cutting funding for, or making harmful changes to the eligibility criteria of, these vital children's programs.**

Americans know that investments in children are investments in our country's next generation of workers and leaders. **A 2016 poll conducted by the Children's Leadership Council (CLC) found an overwhelming 63% of Americans favor Congress increasing funding for programs and services to meet children's needs in the areas of education, health and nutrition. The same poll also found 70 percent of Americans believe children would be better off if government did more to support parents and families.**

However, we are falling far short of what is needed to ensure our nation's future competitiveness. For example, early learning programs, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start/Early Head Start, help children to get a strong start and parents to work and support their

families. Yet, CCDBG serves only one in six children eligible for federal assistance, Head Start overall reaches less than half of eligible children, and Early Head Start reaches only one in twenty eligible infants and toddlers.

We strongly urge you to oppose additional cuts to children's programs, including those that would result from continuing sequestration or through shifting defense sequestration cuts to domestic discretionary programs.

The Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, child nutrition programs, SSBG, SSI and Social Security also play a crucial role in the lives of children facing the greatest challenges, including: children in poverty; children suffering abuse and neglect; children in foster care or the juvenile justice system, and children with disabilities. **Medicaid provides coverage for approximately 37 million children**, including children with disabilities, children in foster care and children from low-income families. And in FY 2015, the most recent data available, **SNAP is estimated to have helped over 19 million children** under the age of eighteen. In FY 2013, the most recent data available, **SSBG served 13.5 million children**, including children in need of foster care, child abuse prevention services, and child protective services. **Social Security is estimated to help nearly 4.3 million children** whose one or both parents have passed away, are retired or disabled, while **Supplemental Security Income helps roughly 1.3 million disabled children**, including those with the most severe disabilities.

Children and youth who are beneficiaries of these programs are some of the most vulnerable in our nation, and their well-being depends in significant part upon the continued success of, and access to, these programs. Any loss in Medicaid or CHIP coverage for these children, a change in their benefits, or structural changes to these programs, such as a cap or block grant, could have disastrous health consequences. Likewise, SNAP, which lifts millions of children out of poverty, provides nutritious food for children and youth nationwide. Any additional cut in SNAP eligibility or benefits or block granting of the program would be hugely detrimental to the well-being of these children. **We strongly urge you to protect these programs for our nation's children and ask you to steadfastly oppose cuts, caps or structural changes to these programs that may negatively impact them and their families.**

Our nation's elected leaders have a long history of working on a bipartisan basis on issues, policies and programs important to our nation's babies, children and youth. It is our hope and expectation that the new Administration and members of Congress continue this history by protecting, defending and advancing policies and programs that improve the lives and futures of our nation's children.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact Randi Schmidt, Executive Director of the Children's Leadership Council, at rschmidt@childrensleadershipcouncil.org or (202) 640-1077.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Campaign for Youth Justice
Child Care Aware® of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Home Society of America
Children's Leadership Council
Child Welfare League of America
CLASP

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ)
Coalition on Human Needs
Every Child Matters
Family Focused Treatment Association
Family Values @ Work
Forum for Youth Investment
Generations United
JWI
League of United Latin American Citizens
LEAnet, a national coalition of local education agencies
LIFT
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Mi Familia Vota

Alliance for Citizenship
MomsRising
NAACP
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association for Bilingual Education
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Child Development Institute
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Oral Health America
Partnership for America's Children
People Demanding Action
RESULTS: The Power to End Poverty
School-Based Health Alliance
SparkAction
State Innovation Exchange
The Children's Partnership
UltraViolet
Voices for Progress
ZERO TO THREE