

# THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

## INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

February 5, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Majority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
1233 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
233 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi,

The Children's Budget Coalition is made up of 68 children-focused organizations who collectively are committed to ensuring that our nation's leaders prioritize robust federal investment in the critical programs that impact children's development and wellbeing, particularly in the areas of health, education, nutrition, housing and welfare. Children have received a declining share of total federal spending for years, with that number reaching an all-time low of 7.47 percent in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. Over the last four years, total federal spending has grown at twice the rate as spending on children. This trend signals that children are not a priority and jeopardizes opportunities for our nation's children to reach their full potential. **As you work to finalize a deal to fund the government, we compel you to rectify this harmful trend by 1) restoring a regular budget process, 2) lifting the discretionary spending caps with parity between defense and non-defense discretionary spending, 3) raising the allocations for appropriations subcommittees that support programs designed to help our children succeed, 4) protecting mandatory programs that invest in children and families. Finally, we ask you to provide immediate relief to the many families with children struggling to recover from natural disasters.**

**Restore a regular budget process:** The government is now relying on its fourth continuing resolution to keep operating. While we understand the need for stopgap spending measures to keep the government functioning, we urge you to end the unsustainable process of funding the government through continuing resolutions. This practice harms children by forcing across the board rescissions to important discretionary programs to stay within Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 (BCA; P.L. 112-25) caps, hindering the ability of agencies to engage in long-term planning, and setting up children's programs as bargaining chips during the negotiating process. We implore you to work together to return to regular order so that kids and families are no longer the victims of the unpredictability of shutdown threats and funding levels that fail to keep pace with inflation.

**Lift discretionary spending caps with parity:** The discretionary spending caps set in the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 (BCA; P.L. 112-25) and their subsequent sequestration effects have impeded the ability of appropriators to adequately fund vital programs that serve children and families. It is of utmost importance that you lift these caps while holding to the core principle of parity between defense discretionary and non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending, as programs that educate, strengthen, and protect children are an imperative and wise investment for ensuring the future security of our nation. First Focus' [Children's Budget 2017](#) tracks spending on over 170 federal programs that invest in families and children, nearly 80 percent of which rely on NDD funding. Yet since 2014, inflation adjusted NDD spending on children has decreased by .78 percent. We insist that you lift the caps with parity, encouraging a budget resolution that increases 302(a) allocations to appropriators so that they can reverse this untenable spending trend.

**Increase allocations to committees that invest in children:** It is also essential that topline appropriations figures be adequately distributed across subcommittees with jurisdiction over programs aimed at families and children. Of the more than 170 programs tracked in *Children's Budget 2017*, 112 fall within the jurisdiction of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, 8 fall within Agriculture, 5 fall within Commerce, Justice, and Science, and 5 fall within Treasury, Housing and Urban Development. Ensuring that these 4 subcommittees receive robust 302(b) allocations is necessary to making kids and families the priorities in the annual spending process.

**Protect mandatory programs that invest in children and families:** Mandatory programs help vulnerable children and families afford basic needs including food, housing, health care and income security. These vital programs work in complement with discretionary funding streams to assist vulnerable children, reduce poverty in the short-run and improve their longer-term outcomes. We oppose the use of cuts to mandatory programs—whether by reduced funding or restrictive eligibility requirements—as an offset for increased discretionary investment in children.

**Pass a supplemental disaster appropriations bill:** In the wake of the devastation from Maria, Irma, and Harvey, we ask you to promptly act on an additional supplemental appropriations bill. There is still a need for additional funding to assist those impacted by the hurricanes and fires. It is imperative that you pass a relief package without further delay that increases funding without burdensome offsets to programs that already support children and families.

Our budget reflects our values and far too often, children remain an afterthought in federal budget decisions. If we truly value our children, that must change. We thank you for your consideration and call on you to prioritize children and families in the funding package for FY 18 and going forward into FY 19.