

# THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

## INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

May 3, 2018

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

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

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Leahy,

The Children's Budget Coalition is made up of over 70 children-focused organizations who collectively are dedicated to ensuring that our nation's leaders prioritize children in the federal budget process. Children are our nation's future. In almost every policy area in our society, it is possible to identify issues specific or unique to children. Unfortunately, these issues often get overlooked and children remain an afterthought.

Children have received a declining share of total federal spending for years, with that number reaching an all-time low of 7.75 percent in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 17). 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, jeopardizes their potential to thrive and succeed in life, and highlights a missed opportunity for federal policymakers to invest in our greatest asset, our children.

The Fiscal Year 2018 (FY 2018) omnibus spending bill (PL 115-141) included some substantial increases in funding for programs supporting children. We applaud those investment decisions, and hope you make similar commitments as the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY 19) appropriations process continues. Specifically, we urge you to: **1) Uphold the Bipartisan Budget Agreement by rejecting an FY 18 rescission package and allocating \$597 billion in Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) funding in FY 19, 2) Increase allocations to subcommittees with jurisdiction over children's programs, and 3) Protect mandatory programs that benefit children and families.**

- 1) Uphold the Bipartisan Budget Agreement:** It is critical that you uphold the Bipartisan Budget Agreement (BBA, PL 115-123) reached on February 9, 2018. This law represents

thoughtful bipartisan progress toward an orderly budget and appropriations process that will allow lawmakers to adequately fund investments in children. To carry through on this potential, Congress must uphold the Agreement by:

- a. **Rejecting any attempts to rescind funds appropriated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (PL 115-141.)** We are deeply concerned by reports that the Office of Management and Budget will propose a rescissions package that would reverse the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018's investments in domestic programs. Such a measure would undermine the promise of a bipartisan budget process. Consideration of any rescissions would seriously complicate the FY 19 annual appropriations process, and almost certainly lead to funding delays that adversely affect agencies' ability to plan and implement programs that benefit children and families. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, many agencies are finally experiencing relief from years of inadequate funding levels. A rescissions process would halt that progress and cause irreparable harm to children's education, health, nutrition, welfare, and housing programs.
  - b. **Increasing Non-Defense Discretionary spending to the negotiated cap of \$597 billion in FY 19.** 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. Meeting the discretionary spending levels negotiated in the Bipartisan Budget Agreement is a vital step to allow lawmakers to adequately fund these programs in FY 19.
- 2) **Increase Investments in Discretionary Children's Programs:** We strongly urge you to ensure that allocations to subcommittees with jurisdiction over departments and agencies charged with managing programs focused on children and families receive increased spending ceilings. Of the 130-plus discretionary programs tracked in the *Children's Budget 2017*, they are funded in the following subcommittees: 112 fall within the jurisdiction of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, eight fall within Agriculture, five fall within Commerce, Justice, and Science, and five fall within Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. We were pleased to see sizeable increases from FY 17 to FY 18 across each of these subcommittees' suballocations. To reverse the harmful trend of divestment in children's programs, we ask that you increase these levels for FY 19 and encourage appropriators to prioritize programs serving kids and families in their FY 19 spending decisions.
- 3) **Protect Mandatory Programs that Invest in Children and Families:** We oppose the weakening of mandatory programs—whether by reduced funding or restrictive eligibility requirements—as an offset for increased discretionary investment in children. Divestment in kids has a real and devastating impact on crucial resources for housing, education, nutrition, health and general welfare to name a few. To ensure that all our nation's children have equal opportunities to reach their full potential, we need a holistic support system for our children and families. Many mandatory programs help vulnerable children and families afford basic needs including food, housing, and health care. These vital programs work in complement with discretionary funding streams to meet the needs of our children, lift

children out of poverty, support families in achieving long-term financial stability, and improve our nation's economic health.

The members of the Children's Budget Coalition recognize the importance of using a comprehensive approach to prioritizing children in federal spending decisions. The coming months represent a meaningful opportunity for you to embrace the principles outlined here, and we stand ready to work with you.

Signed,  
First Focus Campaign for Children

CC: The Honorable Roy Blunt  
The Honorable Susan Collins  
The Honorable John Hoeven  
The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
The Honorable Jerry Moran  
The Honorable Patty Murray  
The Honorable Jack Reed  
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen