

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

U.S. SENATE & HOUSE COMMITTEES ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

April 15, 2016

Statement for the record on the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill. The First Focus Campaign for Children requests funding the following critical programs that greatly benefit children and families accordingly:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

1. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs, **\$165,000,000**;
2. Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), **\$3,961,000,000**;
3. Head Start and Early Head Start, **\$9,602,095,000**;
4. Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, **\$35,000,000**; and
5. Healthy Homes Program, **\$35,000,000**

U.S. Department of Education

1. McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, **\$85,000,000**

INVESTING IN KIDS

First Focus is a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Our organization is committed to ensuring that all of our nation's children have equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

There are more than 200 distinct child and family programs and the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services and Education has jurisdiction over many. Every year for the last ten years, First Focus has published an annual *Children's Budget* book that offers a detailed analysis and guide to federal spending levels and priorities on children and families.

Last year's *Children's Budget 2015* showed that the share of federal spending dedicated to children fell to just 7.89 percent, down from its highest level of 8.5 percent in 2010. Consequently, the federal share of discretionary spending dedicated to children has dropped by 7.2 percent over the last five years.

On an inflation-adjusted basis, federal discretionary spending on children has dropped by 11.6 percent between 2010 and 2015. Discretionary funding dedicated to children's health, education, child welfare, training, safety, and nutrition have all decreased, even without adjusting for inflation.

We ask that you reverse this trend and increase funding for these critical programs under your subcommittee's jurisdiction that benefit children.

THE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT PROGRAMS

Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
FY 17 Request: \$165,000,000

National estimates have found that 1.3 to 1.7 million youth experience one night of homelessness a year with 550,000 youth being homeless for a week or longer. As a result of these significant numbers, we request \$165 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs.

The funding would help prevent trafficking, identify survivors, and provide services to runaway, homeless and disconnected youth. Previous funding has laid the foundation for a national system of services for our most vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming or have already been victims of exploitation and trafficking, abuse, familial rejection, unsafe communities, and poverty.

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
FY 17 Request: \$3,961,000,000

There is great promise in the reforms included in the bipartisan reauthorization of CCDBG. Unfortunately, there is still insufficient funding to implement these reforms, which are designed to achieve the important goals of ensuring the health and safety of child care, improve quality of care, and make it easier for families to obtain and retain child care assistance. Without a significant increase in CCDBG funding, states may be forced to cut the number of children receiving child care assistance or reduce payment rates for already low-paid child care providers. We request \$3.961 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to make high-quality child care more available and affordable for the families who need it most.

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
FY 17 Request: \$9,602,095,000

Head Start and Early Head Start play an important role in providing vulnerable children under age five with the comprehensive care and education that they need to prepare for school. At the current funding level, Head Start can serve only slightly over two out of five eligible preschoolers. Early Head Start serves just 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. Proposals for more Head Start programs to provide full-school-day, full-school-year services would help to ensure that our lowest-income children receive a strong early learning experience. We request \$9,602,095,000 for Head Start and Early Head Start to improve the outcomes of our earliest learners and future generations.

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM

Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
FY 17 Request: \$35,000,000

Current lead poisoning surveillance is limited to 29 states and the District of Columbia due to severe funding cuts. National lead poisoning surveillance would enable communities to identify lead poisoning outbreaks to prevent catastrophes such as that of Flint, Michigan.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is the only agency that houses the information regarding where and when children are poisoned, maintaining it through a surveillance system that monitors blood test results for 4 million children each year. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as state and local health and housing agencies, rely on this surveillance system to target funds and enforcement to the highest-risk areas. The recent funding cuts have geographically restricted the surveillance effort and hurt local health departments in their prevention and case management efforts. We request \$35 million for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program.

HEALTHY HOMES PROGRAM

Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
FY 17 Request: \$35,000,000

The Healthy Homes Program helps children and families avoid the effects multiple childhood diseases and injuries in the home. This initiative takes a comprehensive approach to these activities by focusing on housing-related hazards in a coordinated effort, rather than addressing a single hazard at a time.

Through robust grants, enforcement efforts, research, and outreach, the Healthy Homes program has been instrumental in achieving a 70 percent reduction in childhood lead poisoning cases since the early 1990s. In addition to saving lives and improving the health of children, this program has saved the nation billions of dollars by increasing productivity, decreasing medical and special education costs, and potentially reducing criminal activity. In order to continue this progress, we request \$35 million for the Healthy Homes program.

MCKINNEY-VENTO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM

Agency: U.S. Department of Education
FY 17 Request: \$85,000,000

Public schools identified a record 1,301,239 homeless children and youth in 2013-2014. This is a 7 percent increase from the previous year, and a 100 percent increase since 2006-2007. With this rise in homeless children and youth, we request \$85 million to implement the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. This amount was authorized in the recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act which is an increase of \$10 million.

This funding would provide services to and identify homeless children and youth, who are at high risk of human trafficking. The EHCY program is effective in mitigating the devastating effects of child and youth homelessness. With the support of EHCY program grants, local education agencies have provided identification, enrollment and transportation assistance, as well as academic support and referrals for basic services. The EHCY program has given homeless children and youth the extra support they need to enroll and succeed in school.