

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

May 11, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Committee
United States Senate
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Committee
United States Senate
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran & Blunt and Vice Chairmen Leahy and Murray,

The Children's Budget Coalition is made of up over 55 children focused organizations who collectively are committed to ensuring that robust federal investment in the critical programs that nurture children is a top priority for our nation's leaders. More specifically, we strongly support robust funding for programs that impact children's development and wellbeing, particularly in the areas of health, education, nutrition, housing and welfare.

As you begin consideration of Fiscal Year 2018 (FY 18) Appropriations legislation, we ask you take into consideration our following four priorities:

1. Reversing the divestment trends in children's programs;
2. Lifting the budget caps for non-defense discretionary spending set forth in the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA; P.L. 112-25);
3. Maintaining parity between non-defense and defense discretionary spending; and
4. Increasing 302b allocations in the Labor, Health & Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS), Agriculture, Transportation and Housing & Urban Development (T-HUD) and Commerce, Justice & Science (CJS) appropriations bills.

We are very concerned with two divestment trends for programs that benefit children identified in First Focus' [2016 Children's Budget Book](#) released in June 2016: (1) children's programs accounted for a mere 2.1 percent of all new total federal spending over the last five years, and (2) the share of total federal spending on children decreased 5.1 percent from 8.25 percent in 2014 to 7.83 percent in 2016. These trends must be reversed and for that reason we strongly oppose the proposed \$462 billion topline non-defense discretionary (NDD) figure in the President's FY 18 Budget Blueprint.

A \$54 billion cut to NDD spending could lead to as much as \$20 billion in cuts to the FY 18 Labor-H appropriations bill which in turn could have significant consequences on over 100 critical programs that support children. Last year the FY 17 House Labor-HHS bill had a funding level of \$161.6 billion which was \$569 million less than the FY 16 enacted level. A \$20 billion cut would represent a decrease of approximately 12 percent from what was already proposed for FY 17. Furthermore, under the current budget caps, NDD spending in FY 18 would be \$516 billion which would be 16 percent below the FY 10 level of \$612 billion. Under the President's proposal, the cut since 2010 would grow to 25 percent.

These proposed deep cuts are not tenable and this divestment trend must be reversed by increasing funding for children's programs through lifting the budget caps. If Congress fails to increase funding and lift the budget caps on NDD appropriations, the cuts to children's programs will have real consequences for real people – especially teachers, young children in low-income families, and students with special needs. The caps are scheduled to rise by approximately 2 percent per year which is roughly enough to begin keeping up with projected inflation, but not enough to also cover population growth or other rising needs of children.

A core principle of the sequestration provisions of the BCA is that cuts would be evenly divided between defense and non-defense programs. We strongly support this principle and ask that FY 18 appropriations bills maintain it. We also strongly oppose using FY 18 NDD appropriations to offset any supplemental funding legislation. Any additional funding needs cannot result in even more cuts to critical programs for children and their families.

As you consider the 302b allocations for the FY 18 appropriations bills, we ask that the allocations for Labor-HHS, Agriculture, T-HUD and CJS bills be increased over the FY 17 allocations. There are approximately 200 programs that critically impact children in these spending bills with over 100 falling under the Labor-HHS spending bill. These programs are critical to assisting children and providing them with resources necessary to leading a long and productive life.

We cannot continue down this divestment path – our children deserve better. The Children's Budget Coalition is committed to ensuring that robust federal investment in the critical programs that nurture children is a top priority for our nation's leaders. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you in the 115th Congress to ensure all our nation's children have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

Best,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
American Psychological Association
Boys & Girls Club
Bread for the World
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund

Children's Health Fund
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
Committee for Children
Communities In Schools
Every Child Matters
Family Focused Treatment Association
First Focus Campaign for Children
Futures Without Violence
Institute for Child Success
Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
MomsRising
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Center on Shared Leadership®
National Crittenton Foundation
National Education Association
National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grade Reform
National Head Start Association
National Network for Youth
National Respite Coalition
National Title I Association
National WIC Association
National Writing Project
Parents Anonymous® Inc.
Partnership for America's Children
Public Advocacy for Kids
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
School Based Health Alliance
SchoolHouse Connection
Share Our Strength
Strengthening Families All Around the World, Inc.
Thousand Days
United Way Worldwide
Voices for Progress
Youth Villages