



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

June 8, 2017

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Keith Ellison
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Sanders, Senator Murray, Senator Schumer, Congressman Ellison and Congressman Scott:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal budget and policy decisions, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing the Raise the Wage Act (S. 1242/H.R. 15).

As an organization committed to ensuring the economic security of children and families in the U.S., we applaud efforts to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024.

Nationwide, nearly 1 in 5 children are living in families with incomes below the poverty line. At its current rate, a parent making minimum wage and working full-time cannot earn enough to pay market rent or lift his or her family out of poverty. Children in the U.S. are disproportionately affected by these low wages, and are 69 percent more likely to live in poverty than adults.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the new wage proposed would give higher pay to the parents of over 19 million children, close to one quarter of all children in the U.S. Additionally, over 40 percent of single parents who work would see an increase in wages. Of these single parents, 44 percent of all working mothers would benefit from the raise.

Increased income for parents has positive effects on children's health. Research from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University shows that prolonged financial instability is shown to increase levels of "toxic" stress in young children, contributing to delayed brain development and increasing the risk of longer-term health issues, such as heart disease and diabetes. Higher income has been shown to improve children's academic achievement by enabling parents to invest in education and extracurricular activities, and to spend more quality time with their kids.

Supporting working parents is an essential component of supporting the well-being of children. The Raise the Wage Act is an important step towards providing 19 million children with increased opportunity for education and economic mobility, and is a vital investment in the future of the country.

We are grateful for your leadership in making children and families a legislative priority, and we look forward to working with you on this and other proposals to improve the well-being of children and youth.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley, President