



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

December 12, 2013

The United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Representative:

The First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan national children's advocacy organization dedicated to making kids the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, **writes to express our support for the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 (H.J. Res. 59)**. Though this agreement is far from ideal, the provided relief from sequestration is a move in the right direction.

Families across the nation have felt the pain as discretionary investments that matter to children have been cut by more than \$4 billion dollars in fiscal year 2013 from sequestration. As a result, more than 57,000 children have been kicked out of Head Start, more families are homeless because of housing cuts, and schools have reduced staff and services to students.

In particular, children with special needs, and those living in low-income areas or near military bases and reservations have been hit hard because of cuts to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title I, and Impact Aid. Funding for child protective services has also been compromised. This all comes on top of nearly \$2 billion in cuts to discretionary investments since 2010. Fortunately, H.J. Res. 59 will provide an allocation level for the Appropriations Committees to restore a majority of these cuts in 2014.

While we are pleased with some aspects of this legislation, we are concerned that sequestration was not entirely replaced. We are also concerned that the allocation levels will allow little or no room for the new investments that our children so desperately need. Investments in children have declined three years in a row and make up less than eight cents of every dollar spent by the federal government. When more than one in every four children lives in poverty, a return to the status quo is simply not enough.

Most importantly, this legislation does nothing to address the expiration of Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) at the end of this calendar year. Without action, more than 1.3 million Americans – many of whom are parents – will face an immediate cutoff of EUC, and another 3.6 million will lose it over the course of the next year. By the end of 2014, nearly 3.6 million children will be affected by these cuts. EUC helps cover basic needs such as housing, food, and clothing. In 2012, unemployment compensation lifted 600,000 children out of poverty. We hope Congress will soon address the shortcomings in this legislation.

In a recent poll commissioned by our organization, 67 percent of respondents were not confident that the life for their children's generation would be better than it has been for them. Only 13

percent believed the lives of American children are better now than they were 10 years ago. With this crisis in confidence, it is clear that we need a budget that fully invests in our children. H.J. Res. 59 is a small step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent underline on the letter "y".

Bruce Lesley
President