

May 19, 2015

The Honorable Danny Davis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gerry Connolly  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Davis, Congressman Connolly, and Congresswoman Lee:

I am writing from Focus Campaign for Children a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal budget and policy decisions. On behalf of 6 national organizations, we thank you for your leadership in introducing the Child Poverty Reduction Act of 2015 (HR 2408).

One in five children in the US are living in poverty, and children continue to experience higher rates of poverty than any other age group in the US. Of all the people living in poverty in this country in 2013, 32 percent of them were children, yet children only comprise 23 percent of the total population. Black and Hispanic children experience higher rates of poverty than white children, with rates of 38 percent and 30 percent respectively compared to 11 percent for white children.

Poverty is a particularly serious problem for children, who are exposed to toxic stress and suffer negative effects for the rest of their lives after living in poverty for even a short time. Children in poverty experience increased rates of infant mortality, higher rates of low birth weight and subsequent health and developmental problems such as chronic disease. They also have worse educational outcomes with poor academic achievement and lower rates of high school graduation.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act would establish a national child poverty target with the goal of cutting child poverty in ten years and eliminating it within 20 years. To meet these goals, it charges a Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Child Poverty with developing a plan, including recommendations to improve the coordination and efficiency of existing initiatives as well as recommendations for new legislation required to reach the target. It tasks the working group with monitoring progress toward the target at the federal and state levels.

Establishing a child poverty target is not unprecedented. In 1999, the United Kingdom established a national child poverty target, which united the Conservative and Labour parties behind a goal of halving child poverty in ten years. Through a mixture of investments for children, measures to make work pay, and efforts to increase financial support for families, the British government halved child poverty between 1999 and 2009. While the UK has been struggling more recently to maintain this reduction in child poverty, the target remains legally enforceable and a point of focus.

A national child poverty target will serve as a rallying cry for the government and other stakeholders to take concrete steps to meet this target. It institutionalizes the goal of reducing child poverty, and serves as an impetus for bipartisan public debate around the most effective interventions needed to achieve this target.

Cutting child poverty should be a top priority for our country. It is not only the right thing to do, but it makes smart economic sense. Child poverty costs the US more than \$500 billion a year, or almost 4 percent of gross domestic product.

We are grateful for your leadership and we look forward to working with you on this and other proposals to improve the well-being of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,

Child Welfare League of America

First Focus Campaign for Children

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)

National Network for Youth

Save the Children

Save the Children Action Network