

September 29, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Democratic Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Democratic Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

As leading advocates for America's children, we encourage you and your colleagues to pass a short-term funding Continuing Resolution (CR) to prevent a government shutdown and provide certainty of services for children. And we urge you to use the time provided by a CR to craft a year-end fiscal package that protects children's long-term interests.

Over the 16 days in 2013, when the government was shutdown, programs and services were compromised and our economy lost \$24 billion, causing real world impact on children. These damaging effects are set to play out again if Congress does not reach some agreement to continue government funding.

For instance, in 2013, Head Start programs had to shut their doors on as many as 19,000 disadvantaged children, leaving them without the chance to learn and without access to nutritious food. The 2013 shutdown had the further cascading effect of leaving parents scrambling to find alternative child care at the risk of missing work and school. If there's an extended government shutdown, some school districts that receive funding from the Impact Aid program – those that educate children living on Indian reservations, military bases, and other federal lands – may face a cash flow shortage and have difficulty funding instructional expenditures or payroll.

For the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a shutdown would mean a shortage of food on the kitchen table for over 45 million Americans – half of whom are children. In 2013, there were some cash reserves available for the program to continue without interruption, but there is concern that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will have reserves available for October benefits.

Children's health could also be put a risk by a government shutdown. In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which monitors the spread of flu and provides access to vaccine programs nationally, was unable to support the seasonal influenza program, and we anticipate that would be the case again. The National Institutes of Health also had to turn away patients taking part in clinical trials, including children with cancer and other diseases.

While we support a short-term CR to keep the government operating after September 30, 2015, we strongly urge both parties to reach a long-term agreement on FY 2016 funding. We are encouraged that Members in both parties recently signaled interest in avoiding sequestration for FY 2016 by raising both defense and non-defense discretionary budget caps. We urge you to raise the non-defense caps to a

level on-par with defense spending to ensure that children's initiatives are protected in a long-term agreement. These initiatives only amount to less than 8 percent of the federal budget, even though children are 25 percent of our nation's population, and have already been cut by almost 7 percent since 2011. Any further cuts to these initiatives would be extremely harmful to our Nation's future.

We hope you and your colleagues will act swiftly to avoid a government shutdown and provide more certainty for children by adopting a long-term agreement as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Federation of Teachers

Children's Health Fund

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

Easter Seals

First Focus Campaign for Children

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

MomsRising

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

National Education Association

National Head Start Association

Public Advocacy for Kids

School-Based Health Alliance

Share Our Strength