

January 11, 2016

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

The Honorable Paul Ryan
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 Ryan and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

As leading advocates for America's children, we would like to thank you and your colleagues for the recent passage of H.R.2029, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, which keeps the federal government running through September 2016. Such action will provide certainty of services for children as well as protect several programs from being eliminated and, in some cases, allow for increases.

We greatly appreciate the leadership you have shown in response to our respective concerns about where children fall in the budget. This is critically important given that one in five children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. As we have previously shared, according to First Focus's Children's Budget 2015, federal funding for children's initiatives has fallen below 8 percent of the federal budget. The analysis shows that inflation-adjusted spending on children is down about 9.4 percent from 2011 to 2015, while overall spending dropped by just 4 percent over the same period.

In the fall, we were pleased that Congress took action on the non-defense discretionary budget caps that disproportionately restrict funding for federal children's initiatives and passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 to provide sequestration relief for fiscal years (FY) 2016 and 2017. The relief will certainly help stem the downward trend of where children fall in the budget. With funding levels in place for FY 2017, we are hopeful that Congress will be able to restore regular order to the appropriations process to provide resources for our nation's priorities, including support for children.

We also want to underscore our appreciation for Congress passing a tax package that makes permanent expiring provisions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). If the provisions had expired, many low-income families would have faced reductions starting in 2018.

Thank you again for your strong leadership on behalf of children and families this year. We look forward to working with you in 2016 and beyond to achieve strong investment for the next generation.

Sincerely,
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers
Children's Health Fund
Child Welfare League of America
Easter Seals
First Focus Campaign for Children

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
MomsRising
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Education Association
National Title I Association
National WIC Association
Public Advocacy for Kids
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
School-Based Health Alliance
Share Our Strength
United Way Worldwide
Youth Villages