

December 6, 2017

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairperson
House Committee on Ways and Means
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways Means
341 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Neal,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and family the priority in federal budget and policy decisions, I am writing to urge you to prioritize children and working families as you lead the conference of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R. 1.) Both the House and Senate tax bills would require drastic cuts to important programs serving children and families in response to the projected deficit increase. Even the [most optimistic economic growth analysis](#) of H.R. 1 estimates that it will increase the deficit by about \$1 trillion—a staggering addition to the national debt.

First Focus' [Children's Budget 2017](#) shows that in the past four years, the share of federal spending on children has declined to less than 8 percent of total federal spending. Harmful sequestration cuts and unrealistic spending caps, authorized in the name of controlling the deficit, are driving forces behind declining federal investments in children. We worry that history will repeat itself as Congress determines how to compensate for the enormous cost of H.R.1. The continued marginalization of children in the federal budget disregards [overwhelming evidence](#) that investing in children yields remarkable returns that should not be ignored.

This year alone, Congress has yet to lift the budget caps under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) and increase non-defense discretionary with parity to defense discretionary spending, reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program and Maternal Infant and Early Care Home Visiting program, or appropriate adequate relief funds for communities ravaged by natural disasters. A driving force behind this inaction has been an ongoing insistence that any meaningful increases in spending must have offsets. We are extremely concerned that the revenue impacts of H.R. 1 would further complicate these negotiations, leaving our nation's most vulnerable children without crucial services.

The tax bills' revenue impacts are not its only threat to families and children. There are several provisions that require reconciliation between the House and Senate that could result in significant harm to our children. These include efforts to eliminate or weaken the extraordinary medical expense deduction, access to the Child Tax Credit for millions of children in immigrant families, the Orphan Drug Tax Credit, the state and local tax deduction, the educator expense deduction, student loan interest deductions and tax breaks for higher education, the Dependent Care Assistance Program, the employer-provided childcare credit, Coverdell Education Savings Accounts, and the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate.

H.R. 1 does much more than cut tax rates and could have long-lasting, negative consequences for our children. As you go to conference, we urge you to pursue bipartisan solutions that do not favor the wealthiest at the expense of families struggling to make ends meet. As an example, during Senate floor consideration of S. Amdt. 1618 to H.R. 1, two amendments (S. Amdt. 1850 and S. Amdt. 1854) were considered to expand the Child Tax Credit beyond the modest improvements of the House and Senate Bills. Together, those amendments garnered support from sixty-eight Senators (more than two-thirds of the Senate) who believed more needs to be done for low-income families. This strongly suggests there is potential for agreement on provisions that support fairness for working families and children—a principle we urge you to pursue in earnest during negotiations.



Bruce Lesley
President

CC: The Honorable Paul Ryan
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Rob Bishop
The Honorable Kathy Castor
The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
The Honorable Raul Grijalva
The Honorable Sander Levin
The Honorable Kristi Noem
The Honorable Devin Nunes
The Honorable Peter Roskam
The Honorable John Shimkus
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Don Young