

URGE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO PRIORITIZE CHILDREN



President Biden released his Fiscal Year 2024 budget request to Congress on March 9th and First Focus was pleased with its prioritization of children. It proposes that our nation:

- Fully restore the expanded Child Tax Credit, which cut child poverty in half in 2021
- Offer families high-quality affordable childcare and universal preschool
- Provide free school meals to an additional 9 million children
- Increase funding for high-poverty schools
- Significantly boost mental health support for our children and young people
- Provide paid family and medical leave and paid sick leave for all workers
- And invest in reforming the child welfare system to keep more families together.

Now that President Biden has formally asked Congress to prioritize children and their wellbeing, it is up to Congress to pass a budget to make it a reality. In the past, Congress has vastly underfunded programs that benefit children, and worse, has agreed to roll funding back even further at various times. With critical decisions about our country's funding priorities being made right now in Congress, it is important that elected officials hear that children's programs must be protected and expanded.

Background

While they have not released a formal budget yet, some House leaders have signaled that they plan to roll back funding for this year's budget to last year's levels, resulting in a 22 percent cut that will be primarily borne by our children. The plan is to make unprecedented cuts to education, health, nutrition and other children's wellbeing programs such as Head Start and child care while retaining tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest among us.

Last year, children only received [11.98 percent](#) of federal budget resources despite making up over twice that amount in their share of the U.S. population. We know from scientific research that the earliest years of life, when [90 percent of brain growth occurs](#), are the most important for future health, longevity and contributions to society. Indeed, investing in the early years produces a [13 percent return](#) on investment. But even with this knowledge, our country has never adequately provided for the success of our kids.

The House's plan to slash already modest funding support for children would [devastate](#) the future of hundreds of thousands of children and leave them less likely to succeed academically, financially and socially. Further, this plan is not only harmful to our children but to the future of our nation overall as implementing it will mean our population will grow up increasingly less healthy and less economically productive.

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Take Action Now

This month, join First Focus on Children, policy experts and other ambassadors in urging our Representatives to speak and write to key decision makers urging them to fully fund President Biden's Budget.

Steps for Writing an Effective Advocacy Email:

1. Reflect on why you care about the wellbeing of children.
2. Consider including information about yourself and why you are writing now.
3. Write a rough draft of your email that includes your support for President Biden's Budget Request to Congress because it expands investment in our children.
4. Mention your opposition to House Congressional Majority plans to roll back funding levels 22 percent by cutting key programs that support our children.
5. Urge that they instead expand resources for children to reflect their proportion of the population.
6. Specifically request that your member of Congress speak and/or write this message to key decision-makers in the House such as [Congressional Leadership](#), [Budget Committee Chairs and Ranking members](#) and [Appropriations Committee Chairs and Ranking members](#). [Note: if your member is a key decision-maker your message will be directly to them]
7. When you are happy with your email, explore the website of your member of Congress for where to send it. Find your Representative [here](#).
8. Share any responses you receive with the First Focus Team.
9. For bonus points, consider also using social media to convey the message above to your member of Congress using a positive and encouraging tone. Don't forget to use the hashtags #Commit2Kids, #InvestInKids and #VoteKids and to tag @Campaign4Kids and your members of Congress ([you can find their social media accounts using our tool here](#)). [You may check out [the social media "how to" document](#) for additional advice.]