

URGE THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN



This month we will look back over last year and take stock of the policy and funding decisions our government made that have impacted children. Given the lack of legislative movement in Congress in 2023, our first action of 2024 will be to contact the Biden-Harris Administration to urge executive action on children's behalf.

Background:

Looking back, it is clear that as COVID-19 receded, so too did our nation's commitment to our children. First Focus' **Children's Budget 2023** found that U.S. spending on children, both in the U.S. and internationally accounted for just 9.89% of the FY 2023 federal budget, a decrease of nearly 16% in real spending from the previous fiscal year. Internationally, the United States historically has spent just a sliver of its budget on children and that trend continues in Children's Budget 2023: only about 9 cents of every \$1 of FY 2023 foreign assistance investments benefit children despite the fact that children make up roughly a third of the global population. Our **Babies in the Budget** report found that while babies and toddlers make up 3.4% of the U.S. population, they receive just 1.5% of all federal spending— an underinvestment in our youngest children when they are developing a foundation that will shape the rest of their lives.

Below are additional examples that highlight the worrisome state of our nation's children:

- **Infant and child mortality**, fundamental measures of child well-being, are rising.
- Children are facing a deepening **mental health** crisis.
- Because Congress failed to extend the **Build Back Better Act (BBBA)** provision that would have continued the improved **Child Tax Credit**, **child poverty** has more than doubled.
- **Childcare** and **WIC** are facing significant funding shortfalls.
- And **childhood vaccination** rates are falling both at home and **internationally**.

Thankfully, the Administration has the ability to take actions on behalf of our children to improve their wellbeing. Some examples of what the administration could do include:

- **Establish a Child Poverty Reduction Target**
- **Propose a Plan to Provide Insurance Coverage to All Kids.**
- **Make Children a Cross-Agency Priority through the Office of Management and Budget**
- **Require Agencies Consider Impact on Children when Designing Policy**
- **Adopt "Best Interest of the Child" Standard across the Administration**
- **Create a White House Office of Children and Youth and/or a Children's Cabinet.**

ACTION SHEET:

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- **Prioritize Work by Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC).**
- **Streamline Access to Medicaid Services.**
- **Direct State Department to provide 10% of HIV funding to Orphans, Vulnerable Children.**

Take Action!

This Month we will join First Focus staff and other Ambassadors in writing to the Biden-Harris Administration to urge them to take one or two of the actions above. You can find details and background on the actions **here!**

Tips for writing your letter and taking action for children—

Draft your email on a computer or plain paper. Consider including:

- **Some information about yourself and why you are writing to them now.**
- **Your reflections on why you became a First Focus Ambassador and what keeps you motivated to advocate for children.**
- **A thank you for their actions on behalf of children thus far.**
- **A specific request to do more, pulling from the above possible actions.**
- **When you are happy with your draft, use **this form** to send your email to President Biden and Vice President Harris.**
- **You could also follow President Biden on **X, Facebook** or **Instagram** and send a shortened version of your message to him there.**
- **Remember to always remain respectful and constructive in your interactions.**
- **Consider emailing 2-3 friends or family members to encourage them to also write a letter.**
- **Include people who also might be interested in becoming a First Focus Ambassador for Children**
- **Tell them why you thought of them as someone who might support this work.**
- **Share with them why you are involved and what motivates you to act on behalf of children.**
- **Mark your calendar to check in with them a week later to gauge their interest and offer them support.**

If you haven't yet, don't forget to follow First Focus on Children and the Campaign for Children on social media (**@First_Focus** and **@Campaign4Kids** on X and **@firstfocus.children** and **@ffcampaign4kids** on Facebook).