

November 4, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Chairman Rogers, Senator Mikulski, and Congresswoman Lowey:

As leading advocates for America's children, we would like to thank you for your support of the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015* that increased the discretionary spending caps for fiscal years (FY) 2016 and 2017. We are hopeful that this fiscal milestone will help provide some level of certainty in the federal budget process.

We do, however, appreciate that there are important steps ahead for the Appropriations Committees to take before the FY 2016 appropriations process is final. Because children's initiatives are spread across several of the 12 appropriations subcommittees, we write to ask for your leadership in crafting 302(b) allocations that prioritize the long-term interests of children.

According to First Focus's *Children's Budget 2015*, the federal budget share dedicated to children has fallen below 8 percent, while they make up about 25 percent of the population. With the vast majority of children's programs on the discretionary side of the federal budget, the report found that they have been cut by about 7 percent since 2011, on an inflation-adjusted basis. Notably, programs in education have seen an almost 20 percent reduction, along with cuts to programs in the areas of abuse and neglect prevention, health, nutrition, housing, safety, and youth job training.

This year, we value the efforts made by you and your colleagues to advance appropriations legislation and restore regular order to the appropriations process. As a result, there have been some bright spots with increases in some children's programs, but we share our concern over the troubling cuts, and even program eliminations, that could hinder their development.

As you take next steps to address FY 2016 appropriations, we know that there will be tough decisions to make, but we urge you to ensure that any year end fiscal package protects the modest increases in children's initiatives reflected in appropriations bills passed to date. Moreover, with the additional resources provided to increase the discretionary spending caps, we hope you will take this opportunity to ensure a strong investment in children, so that they have a brighter future ahead.

Sincerely,
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers

Child Welfare League of America
Children's Health Fund
Easter Seals
First Focus Campaign for Children
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
MomsRising
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Education Association
National Title I Association
National WIC Association
Partnership for America's Children
Public Advocacy for Kids
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
School-Based Health Alliance
Share Our Strength
United Way Worldwide
YMCA of the USA
Youth Villages