

CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

September 14, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Committee
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Chairman Cochran, Democratic Leader Reid and Vice Chairman Mikulski,

The Children's Budget Coalition strongly urges you to prioritize investments in children's programs while working in a bipartisan fashion as you continue your work to complete the 12 appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2017. In the event that the appropriations process is not completed by September 30, 2016, we urge you to pass a short-term Continuing Resolution. We also request that you immediately address the looming health crisis caused by the spread of the Zika virus with additional emergency funding.

The Children's Budget Coalition strongly supports robust funding for programs that impact children's development and well-being, particularly in the areas of health, education, nutrition, housing and welfare. There are more than 200 distinct programs that benefit children and families and the Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health & Human Services and Education, Agriculture and Transportation Housing & Urban Development have jurisdiction over many of these critical programs. While we are aware of the tight budgetary environment due to the topline budget of \$1.07 trillion and the 302(b) allocation, we are still very concerned with two disinvestment trends for programs that benefit children:

Total government spending on children in the last five years, when adjusted for inflation, is down 9.4 percent, more than twice the rate of overall spending decreases of 4 percent. These totals include mandatory and discretionary spending as well as American Recovery & Reinvestment Act outlays. We are concerned with these disproportionate cuts to children's programs and the long-term impact they will have on the futures of our nation's children and families.

The overall share of federal spending for children is only 7.89 percent of total government spending, which is down from children's 8.29 percent share in 2014. Furthermore, over the last five years, the federal share of discretionary spending dedicated to children has dropped by 7.2 percent. We are concerned with this disinvestment in children, which has not kept pace with overall increases in federal spending during the same time.

In addition, the spread of the Zika virus in the United States is a major threat that must be addressed immediately. On August 30, 2016, Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stated that federal funds to fight the Zika virus were nearly exhausted with the CDC spending \$194 million of the \$222 million it was allocated to fight the virus. With more Zika virus cases being detected coupled with diminishing federal funds to combat it, we are jeopardizing the health of expectant mothers and children. We ask that you work with your colleagues to reach an agreement to pass emergency funding to combat, treat, and research – including a potential vaccine – the Zika virus immediately.

The Children’s Budget Coalition is committed to ensuring that robust federal investment in the critical programs that nurture children is a top priority for our nation’s leaders and you have an opportunity to help us increase the investment in children. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you in the coming months to ensure all of our nation’s children have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
Child Welfare League of America
Children’s Health Fund
Easterseals
Every Child Matters
First Focus Campaign for Children
Institute for Child Success
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
MomsRising
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
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
YMCA of the USA
Youth Villages