

April 27, 2023

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester  
1724 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Blunt Rochester:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our support for the CARING for Social Determinants Act of 2023 (H.R.1066).

Myriad things outside of a child's own body greatly influence their well-being. Known as social determinants of health (SDOH), these external factors play pivotal roles in children's health outcomes. Things like their physical environment, socioeconomic status, exposure to violence at home, and many more affect a child's childhood and adult health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Multiple studies suggest that SDOH account for up to 50% of variations in children's health<sup>2</sup> and can contribute to maladies like obesity, asthma, injuries, and malnutrition.<sup>3</sup> Children who live in poverty are far more likely to be exposed to a number of these negative factors that impact their health throughout their life.

Healthcare providers are in a unique position to address SDOH for their pediatric patients, but research shows that they often go unaddressed during routine doctor's visits.<sup>4</sup> With no standard screening available, primary care providers lack the resources to address these holistic issues. H.R.1066 bridges this care gap by directing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide research-backed strategies to tackle social determinants of health for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) recipients. Children living in poverty have increased risks of asthma, developmental delay, and heart disease in both childhood and adulthood, as well as unmet psychological and social needs.<sup>5</sup> Primary care physicians can offer the first line of defense against lifelong illness and toxic stress brought on by these SDOH, and proper education is crucial to maintain positive health outcomes. Additionally, this legislation directs HHS

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<sup>1</sup> Chung, Esther K. et al. "Screening for Social Determinants of Health Among Children and Families Living in Poverty: A Guide for Clinicians." *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*, Vol 46(5). May 2016.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1538544216000341>.

<sup>2</sup> Federico, Monica J. et al. "The Impact of Social Determinants of Health on Children with Asthma." *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*, Vol 8(6). June 2020. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2213219820303263>

<sup>3</sup> Currie, Candace et al. "Social Determinants of Health and Well-Being Among Young People." World Health Organization. May 2012.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/326406>

<sup>4</sup> Chung, Esther K. et al. "Screening for Social Determinants of Health Among Children and Families Living in Poverty: A Guide for Clinicians."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

to support organizations who tackle the social determinants themselves, helping to stave off the worst of these negative outcomes.

We commend you for working to holistically support children and address all factors that impact their lives and well-being. We look forward to working with you to pass the CARING for Social Determinants Act of 2023.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "y".

Bruce Lesley  
President