

# USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO HIGHLIGHT THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

*"Our nation's children are the kite strings that keep our national ambitions aloft — they are the dreamers and doers, who will determine the course of our future."*

-President Biden, National Children's Day Proclamation 2023

March 2024 will be a frantic month for our federal government filled with inflection points that we will use to educate and raise awareness about the needs of children and to affect policy.

**(Please note: Some of the dates below are fluid and may move.)**

- At the beginning of the month, (by March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>) Congress will need to address funding decisions for fiscal year 2024, that it has failed to do for five months, or face a partial government shutdown.
- On March 7<sup>th</sup>, President Biden will travel to the Capitol to give his State of the Union address (SOTU).
- Then on March 11<sup>th</sup>, the President will send his fiscal year 2025 Budget Request to Congress, laying out his administration's funding and policy priorities and providing a broad framework for Congressional action.
- The release of the President's Budget triggers the House and Senate to begin their annual funding decision-making for fiscal year 2025, likely just days after finalizing decisions for 2024.
- To add to the mayhem, this year is an election year, meaning that politics will influence and slow down action in Congress.

This March, we will hook our social media posts to events occurring at the federal level to ensure that decision-makers prioritize children as they make key funding and policy decisions.

## Background:

### *Children in Crisis*

Millions of children in the United States and around the world are in crisis and deserve our elected officials' attention. Unfortunately, in the past, the U.S. government has invested very little in the wellbeing of children (only 1.7 percent of federal spending goes to babies and toddlers and just under 10 percent to children).

These are just a few examples of the challenges, and increasingly poor outcomes, our children are experiencing:

- **Child and Teen Mortality:** Child and teen mortality increased by 20% between 2019 and 2021, the largest increase in 50 years. These tragic figures come after a previous study found U.S. children had a 70% greater chance of dying in childhood than kids born in other wealthy countries

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- **Infant Mortality:** The U.S. infant mortality rate, which was already much higher than in other wealthy nations, increased for the first time in two decades between 2021 and 2022.
- **Child Hunger:** 10% of all U.S. children (7.3 million kids) did not have enough food to keep them healthy in 2022. That is a nearly 7% increase of children over the previous year. Rates of food insecurity were significantly higher for households with children that included a Black or Hispanic adult.
- **Child Poverty:** Child poverty more than doubled in 2022 compared to 2021, with the rate of children living in poverty increasing from 5.2% to 12.4%. This increase represents more than 5 million children we allowed to backslide into poverty within a single year.
- **Children's Mental Health:** We are in the midst of a mental health crisis, where more than 60% of children who experience a severe depressive episode do not receive treatment. Tragically, in 2021, suicide was the second most common cause of death among children aged 10-14. Firearm deaths ranked first.
- **Children's Health Coverage:** As states have restarted Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) redeterminations following the phase out of COVID-19 continuous coverage protections, children are falling through the cracks and losing their health care coverage.
- **Children are disproportionately impacted by the worst aspects of poverty – they make up more than half of the global poor, despite constituting roughly 30% of the total global population. According to UNICEF, globally in 2024, children are likely to see increased exposure to violence, war, and economic hardship.**

## Key Decisions Being Made this Month

At the beginning of March, Congress is set to make final fiscal year 2024 funding decisions, including whether to provide much-needed additional support for infants and children via USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and low income rental housing subsidies.

The second week of March, the President will be making his State of the Union Address and his Budget Request to Congress for 2025, and can use those opportunities to call on Congress to take specific policy and funding actions on behalf of children.

The third and fourth week of March Congressional Appropriations Committees will begin taking input on what funding levels to include in their annual spending legislation for 2025 and again it will be critical that they prioritize funding programs that benefit children.

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Throughout the month as a number of critical decision points are being made at the federal level, First Focus staff, our allies and supporters will seek to highlight the realities our children face and to urge decision makers in Congress and the administration to **prioritize** creating a world in which all children can lead healthy, safe, and happy lives that offer them the opportunity to thrive.

The United States lags behind many of its peer nations in the supports we provide children and families. Child-centered policy is good for our country and is good for our kids. The immediate relief and stability of a positive pro-child agenda can strengthen families, communities, and the nation's future. This agenda also would allow children to think beyond their immediate circumstances and dream of what they will become. While we are very grateful to the **Champions for Children** in Congress who continue to push forward on behalf of kids, significantly more resources and positive policy action from Congress is needed.

## Take Action

1. Throughout the month of March urge key decision makers like President Biden and members of Congress to prioritize children by using engaging social media posts.
2. Tag @Campaign4Kids and relevant policy makers, especially your own Representative and Senators to amplify the reach of your posts. (you can find their social media accounts using our tool [here](#)). [You may check out the **social media “how to” document for additional advice.**]
3. Share personal stories or statistics, pulling from the above, to make the issue relatable.
4. If your member of Congress is a **Champion for Children** you can add the #Champion4Children hashtag. (Don't forget to draw their attention to your post by tagging them using the “@” function followed by their social media handle.)
5. In any public social media posts remember to always use a positive and encouraging tone.
6. Share any responses you receive with the First Focus Team.