

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

May 7, 2025

U.S. Members of Congress
United States Congress
Washington, DC

Dear Members of Congress:

As members and advocacy partners of the Children's Budget Coalition, we, the undersigned organizations, call on you to reject damaging cuts and structural changes being proposed for Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) programs. These critical federal lifelines drive much-needed investments in our children to reduce child poverty and food insecurity, provide health care and child protection services, and offer financial security to millions of families with children. We need to work together to ensure all children enjoy safe places to live, learn, play, and thrive, especially while too many families are managing the pressure of unaffordable prices for food, rent, and other daily essentials.

The reconciliation instructions included in the FY2025 budget resolution (H.Con.Res.14) will result in [devastating consequences for far too many of our nation's children and their families](#). Broadly, it predicts greater economic hardship for families with kids and other vulnerable populations, increased income inequality, and [escalating deficit spending](#). These proposed cuts are not just numbers and the policy changes are not minor reforms – [they represent real harm](#) to children's health, nutrition, safety, and economic security by [targeting four major social safety net programs](#): Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and SSBG.

These 4 programs— Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and SSBG— represent nearly half of all investments in children ages 0 to 3 and almost one-third of all investments in children making it seemingly inevitable that this reconciliation package will exacerbate child poverty and hunger and strip healthcare and essential assistance from low-income families with children – particularly infants and toddlers -- all around the country. Deep cuts to these supports will force states and local governments to make budget tradeoffs that jeopardize the delivery of public services upon which children, families and communities rely daily. There must be a better understanding of the serious challenges children experience affecting all aspects of their lives:

- [Infant mortality is rising](#): For the first time in decades, infant deaths are climbing. This is not just a public health disaster; it's a moral failure.
- [Child mortality is rising](#): This problem is being driven by gun violence, rising suicide rates, and a mental health crisis that has gone unaddressed.
- [Child poverty is rising](#): After historic reductions due to pandemic-era relief, poverty has more than doubled since 2021 after supports were withdrawn or left to expire.
- [Uninsured rates for children are rising](#) and access to care has declined: Hospital capacities for children were shifted to adults during the pandemic but have not shifted back and pandemic health coverage protections for children have been allowed to expire.
- [The children's mental health crises is soaring](#): Every measure of this crisis has been rising.

- [Homelessness is up](#): Record numbers of children and families are living without stable and affordable housing.
- [Hunger is surging](#): Food insecurity has returned with a vengeance as SNAP and school meal programs have been reduced.
- [Child care is in crisis](#): The American child care system faces challenges with respect to costs, limited access, and a shortage of providers, impacting families, public resources, and the economy.
- [Child abuse deaths are increasing](#): Families are stressed, services are stretched, and kids are paying the price.

Important budget decisions are before you that will have consequential effects on the lives of our children and grandchildren. Child-centered policy is good for our country and is good for our kids. We urge you to choose to prioritize children, their families, and those most in need when making budget and policy decisions.

Reconciliation Proposals Disproportionately Harm Children

By slim margins, the FY2025 budget resolution passed both chambers painting a deeply troubling picture: our children—the most vulnerable and voiceless among us—are being overlooked and disproportionately targeted for severe cuts in critical programs that provide everyday needs. H.Con.Res.14 sets dramatic funding cuts for the House Energy and Commerce (\$880 billion) and the Agriculture Committee (\$230 billion) totaling more than \$1 trillion in mandatory spending cuts over ten years. [Those staggering cuts are only achievable by targeting deep decreases for Medicaid](#) and SNAP and looking to TANF and SSBG for major cuts and reforms in order to reach the \$1.5 trillion in funding reductions supported by the House and Senate majority leaders.

Together, [Medicaid, SNAP, SSBG, and TANF accounted for over \\$191 billion of our investments in children in FY2024](#)—almost 30% of total federal investments in children. These programs are even more important for infants and toddlers, making up nearly 50% of all federal support for children 0-3 totaling \$51 billion. In the whole federal budget, children make up only 8.87% of federal funding, but over 25% of spending from Medicaid, SNAP, SSBG, and TANF goes to kids. The targeting of babies and toddlers is even more severe— [they receive only 1.52% of federal spending](#) but receive nearly 7% of Medicaid, SNAP, SSBG, and TANF funds. The severe cuts under discussion would disproportionately target children and babies.

Prioritize Children’s Well-Being: Good for Kids and Our Country’s Future

[There is overwhelming evidence](#) that a comprehensive network of programs and services is essential to reducing child poverty, protecting children's health and safety, combating food insecurity, and providing relief to families with children. Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and SSBG work together to serve as federal lifelines for millions of families with children.

The current reconciliation process makes clear that some lawmakers are pursuing goals that do nothing to address today’s economic crisis for so many families with kids. Along with harsh funding cuts, they are trading the future of millions of kids to allow for expensive tax cuts rather than approaching tax reform in a manner that would allow for robust investments in our children, their families, and communities at a time when families with children need more support, not less.

The cuts and structural changes under discussion would restrict programmatic eligibility and access, impose bureaucratic hurdles, and reduce benefits, putting millions of children at risk of losing health coverage, going hungry, and experiencing economic hardship. **We urge you to ask: do the proposed cuts and fundamental policy changes being proposed support the best interest of our children?**

- Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide health coverage for over 37 million children and over 40% of all births in our nation.
- Medicaid and CHIP cover one-third of all school-age children (5-18 years old), nearly half of the 13 million U.S. children with special health care needs, and over 3 million children of veterans.
- More than 1 in 3 kids in the median school district rely on Medicaid for access to comprehensive and preventive health services, including school-based mental health services. Children enrolled in Medicaid miss fewer school days, are more likely to graduate from high school, grow up to be healthier, and earn higher wages in adulthood.
- Medicaid covers 2.3 million children with disabilities. Nearly half of children with special health care needs, such as a physical or behavioral disability, are enrolled in Medicaid. Nearly 700,000 kids, many with disabilities, rely on Medicaid for long-term services and support.
- An estimated 99% of children in foster care have Medicaid coverage. Foster youth often require comprehensive medical, mental health, and developmental services. Children in foster care are much more likely to have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as abuse, neglect, and/or household dysfunction, than the general population.
- Medicaid and CHIP are particularly critical for children living in rural, frontier, and underserved communities, where over 40% of children depend on these programs for their health care coverage. These vital programs sustain essential pediatric care, local hospitals, community health centers, and urgent care clinics, which are often the sole providers of health care in these underserved areas.
- Medicaid is an important source of health insurance for survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.
- Child welfare agencies also receive vital support from Medicaid funding for directly providing health services, including rehabilitative services, targeted case, management, and treatment foster care.
- Nearly 15 million children rely on SNAP benefits to access adequate nutrition, making up nearly 40% of all program participants. The FY2025 budget would lead to reckless cuts to SNAP benefits, and likely stricter eligibility requirements.
- 70% of TANF beneficiaries are children, yet the FY2025 reconciliation instructions could result in dramatic funding cuts for the program leaving fewer families able to access temporary cash assistance, job training, and child care support.
- TANF is one of the few federal programs providing direct financial aid to families in crisis. It is important to child welfare for three reasons: its role in providing support to relative caregivers, its significant financial support to wraparound child welfare services, and its potential to address child poverty, which research has shown is a risk factor in abuse and neglect.
- Significant TANF funding is used by states to support families’ access to affordable child care. Child care is already difficult to find and afford – cuts to TANF would put this vital resource out of reach for more families, as well as negatively impact our economy.
- SSBG is the biggest federal source of funding for child abuse prevention and protection. It funds essential child welfare programs, including child protective services, foster care, and support for

struggling families, as well as child care in some states. H.Con.Res 14 would potentially eliminate SSBG entirely, gutting programs that prevent child abuse and neglect and help families afford care for their children.

- Cutting TANF and eliminating SSBG would result in nearly [40,000 children and their families losing access to child care](#).
- State and local governments have relied heavily on SSBG and TANF dollars to meet the unique needs of their communities; they would be hard pressed to replace lost funds if these programs were to be cut or eliminated, resulting in serious consequences for millions of children, caregivers, families and communities.

Tragically, our country is failing to meet our children’s basic needs. When we help children grow and succeed, we are paving the way for our country’s next generation of workers and leaders. Simply put: if we want a thriving nation in the future, we must invest in the children who will shape it.

Importance of Investing in Children

The proposed damaging funding cuts and policy shifts ignore the undeniable fact that investments in children's well-being lead to near- and long-term positive outcomes. [Research shows that investments in children yield immense returns](#), not just for their individual well-being, but for the nation as a whole. Children who grow up healthy, well-fed, and financially secure are more likely to stay in school. In [an analysis of the effectiveness of 133 policy changes over the last 50 years](#) by coauthors Nathaniel Hendren and Ben Sprung-Keyser, the findings were clear and stark. Public investments in children often pay for themselves and those investments have, by far, the best ROI or marginal value of public funds (MVPF). There are no other investments that perform as well as those in children.

Unfortunately, children’s needs already are woefully underfunded. Despite making up roughly 23% of the U.S. population, [children received just 8.87% of the federal investments in FY2024](#), the third straight year of decline and is far below what is necessary to meet the unique and growing needs of our nation’s children and families. Again, [our analysis for the Babies in the Budget](#) estimates that the share of federal spending on our youngest is shockingly low at just 1.52%.

Every child deserves the opportunity to live a joyful and fulfilling life. This includes having their basic health and safety needs met, and ensuring no child is deprived of a promising future due to their family’s struggles. Unfortunately, our country is falling short in this area. We strongly urge all members to prioritize children and their families as you make pivotal budget and policy decisions over the coming weeks and months. We all want a prosperous nation in the years ahead, and this calls for increased investments supporting and protecting our children who will build it.

Sincerely,

First Focus Campaign for Children

A Rosie Place for Children (IN)

Adopt America Network (OH)

AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services

Alabama Lifespan Respite
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Muslim Health Professionals
ARCH
Arrow Child & Family Ministries
Association of Children's Residential & Community Services (ACRC)
Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin
California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy
Caregivers Care Coaching and Consulting (GA)
Caring Across Generations
Channel Islands Social Services
Child Care Resource Center - California
Child Welfare League of America
Children Now (CA)
Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Advocates for Change (IL)
Children's Aid (NY)
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Children's Home Society of North Carolina
Children's Institute (CA)
Citizens' Committee for Children (NY)
Coalition on Human Needs
COFCCA (NY)

Colorado Children's Campaign
Common Good iowa
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Courage California
DC Action
DePaul Community Resources (VA)
embrella (NJ)
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Family Focused Treatment Association
Family To Family Adult Care Service (TN)
Forestdale, Inc. (NY)
FosterAdopt Connect (MO)
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Fulton County Office for Aging and Youth (NY)
Futures Without Violence
Generations United
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!
Human Services Consultants (AZ)
Illinois Respite Coalition
Inspire Positivity Inc. (GA)
KARE Crisis Nursery (CA)
Ladybug House
Little Ones Respite Care and Crisis Nursery, LLC (VA)
Mental Health America

National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Association of School Nurses

National Association of Social Workers

National Diaper Bank Network

National Education Association

National Respite Coalition

OK Cares

Parents as Teachers National Center

People Places, Inc. (VA)

Prevent Child Abuse America

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Rapid Resource for Families, Inc (NC)

RISE Services (AZ)

Rising Sun Center for Opportunity (CA)

SHOPP (NY)

SIBS (IL)

The Karabelle Pizzigati Initiative in Advocacy for Children, Youth, and Families at the University of Maryland, College Park

UDW Local 3930 (CA)

University of Colorado & The National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect

Voice for Adoption

VOICES for Alabama's Children

Voices for Utah Children

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

Youth Villages

ZERO TO THREE