

Prioritize Children and Families in FY 26 Funding Decision

As child advocates, we urge lawmakers to separate the five, remaining bipartisan FY26 annual spending bills from the Homeland Security bill and pass that five-bill minibus this week to avoid another damaging partial government shutdown that would prevent critical services from reaching children and their families across the country.

[Yesterday](#), we shared how the Department of Homeland Security bill needs to be drastically changed to protect children. Today, we urge you to pass the remaining FY26 bills in order to 1) provide critical federal investments for children and families and 2) [prevent the anticipated harms another partial government shutdown would have on kids](#).

Our analysis shows that three of the remaining FY26 bills—Labor/HHS, Transportation/HUD, and National Security/Department of State —fund 175 programs serving children and families and represent 88 percent of federal discretionary investments in children. This funding should not be delayed. The partial shutdown late last year already caused significant harm to children, and even a short shutdown would create uncertainty for families, threaten access to basic necessities, and undermine the long-term impact of these programs. Children should be a priority in budget decisions and never used as bargaining chips.

[The Children's Budget 2025](#), published by First Focus on Children, shows that investments in children have declined for the fourth consecutive year, both in total and as a share of the federal budget. In FY 2025, just 8.57 percent of federal spending went to children—only \$8.57 out of every \$100—despite growing needs.

This trend is moving in the wrong direction. We must invest more—not less—in children and their families. Child poverty affects every aspect of a child's life, and strong evidence shows that investments in children improve health, educational outcomes, and long-term economic success. These investments strengthen families, communities, and the nation's future.

We appreciate the extensive work to finalize the FY 2026 appropriations bills and the efforts to protect key programs in early childhood, education, health care, housing, and foreign assistance, and include guardrails to prevent funds from being diverted away from children's priorities. We remain deeply concerned that many programs serving children were proposed for elimination in the House bills and the President's FY26 request, but fortunately, funding is restored for many of those programs in these bills.

Truly child-centered policy requires ensuring that no child is left behind when families face hardship or instability. [We strongly urge you to continue to reaffirm Congress's constitutional authority over federal spending and to ensure that appropriated funds are implemented as intended—fully, promptly, and transparently](#). Upholding this core constitutional principle is essential to protecting the programs and services that give every child a fair and meaningful opportunity to thrive.