

# THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

## INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

May 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris  
The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
322 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
U.S. Senate  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
U.S. House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

As members of the Children's Budget Coalition, comprising over 80 advocacy organizations dedicated to prioritizing children and families in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to urge you to continue building off of the monumental changes for our children made by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) in your upcoming deliberations on the American Jobs Plan, American Families Plan, and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget.

The ARP made historic progress for children by enacting an expansion of the Child Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit as well as large investments in child care, nutrition, rental assistance, child health, and more. [According to the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University](#), these changes could cut child poverty by more than half in 2021. This is a remarkable and significant policy and funding gain for children in this country.

In addition to its projected effects on children, the aspects that will make the most difference for kids – such as the tax credit expansions and the stimulus checks – also have proven to be the most popular. [A recent CNN/SSRS poll found](#) that 85% of Americans support providing larger tax credits for families and making it easier for them to claim. [Headlines across the major networks](#) and [newspapers](#) have touted how child poverty will be cut in half. People are excited that, for the first time in a generation, we are taking on a problem that leaves children 54% more likely to be impoverished than adults.

We cannot let this progress stall, and we urge you to build upon it – immediately, starting with the American Jobs and Families Plans as well as FY 2022 appropriations. The needs of children continue to grow both as a result of the pandemic and as a result in neglected investment for the past decade. We know that investments in our children have a tremendous return, improving their near- and long-term outcomes and healthy development, benefitting society and our economy.

We are pleased to see that the American Jobs Plan includes broadband investments to make every child have access to the internet, the elimination of toxic lead piping, and billions of dollars in new investments in public housing, schools, child care facilities, and community violence prevention. We also are pleased to see the American Families Plan makes even more progress on child care, nutrition programs, paid leave, and permanent extension of some of the ARP's provisions. It is our belief that when we lift up children, we all benefit.

As the Administration presents its full FY 2022 budget priorities and the House and Senate move to pass FY 2022 budget resolutions, we urge you to prioritize children, reverse the downward trend of spending on children over the last several years, and set forth a budget that establishes a robust, comprehensive investment plan benefitting children's well-being and healthy development that covers all aspects of our children's lives.

The economy has begun recovering, but that recovery must be paired with measures to ensure children are benefiting and efforts to address racial and economic inequities. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the unemployment rate was 6% in April 2021, but that is still 2.5 percentage points higher than before the pandemic and may not be equally distributed among those with and without children. According to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey for April 14-26, 2021, nearly 9 million children lived in a household where at least one adult did not have paid work in March 2021. Adults in households with children were nearly twice as likely to report being behind on rent, too. And despite significant progress on food insecurity, between 7 to 11% of adults in households with children reported that children in the household were not eating enough because the household could not afford it; while 6% of white adults in households with children were food insecure, the number rises to 16% for Black and Latino communities.

In addition to economic needs, children must have their health needs prioritized. While vaccination has made significant progress across the country for adults and seniors, many children still lack any access to vaccines. [According to the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), as of May 20, 2021, nearly 3.94 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the public health crisis early last year. Over 40,000 new child COVID-19 cases were reported for the week ending May 20, 2021, meaning children represented nearly 20% of the new reported cases that week. As the caseload continues to increase, greater research and more data is needed to understand the longer-term effects of the coronavirus on our children's physical, emotional, and mental health. [From April to October 2020](#), hospitals across the U.S. saw a 24% increase in the proportion of mental health emergency department visits for children ages 5 to 11, and a 31% increase for children and adolescents ages 12 to 17. More should be done to put an emphasis on ensuring children's health needs are met.

Building back better will require us to rise to the occasion on these and many other issues facing children, parents, and families. Child care and early learning programs are among the worthiest and most commonsense investments that we can make as a country, helping to equalize opportunities for our children. The settings that our children spend their days in matter for improved outcomes in health, well-being, education, economic stability, and reduced involvement in the criminal justice system. Families need high-quality, accessible, and affordable programs for their children so that they can work or attend school.

The child care sector of our economy is struggling to keep its doors open as it encounters increased costs for cleaning supplies, additional personal protection equipment and personnel. In a December survey from the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#), 56% of respondents say they are losing money every day they operate. Since the onset of the pandemic, [more than 20,000 child care centers have closed permanently](#) and tens of thousands more may be shuttered before the year's end. According to

the recent NAEYC survey, as best as participants could predict, “one in four child care centers and one in three family child care homes say that if enrollment stays where it is, and no additional support comes forward, they will have to close within the next three months.” These predicted closures rise substantially for programs that are minority-owned, with more than 50% of those minority operators surveyed indicating that they won’t survive more than three months if circumstances do not improve. Our recovery will not be successful and inclusive if we fail to invest in this essential sector of our economy that supports so many of our children, parents and families.

In addition, the needs of homeless children, youth, and families due to the outbreak of COVID-19 continue to increase. Even before the pandemic, [only 1-in-4 families](#) who are eligible for rental assistance in the United States receive it despite the great need for it. Furthermore, families with children are a decreasing share of federal housing assistance beneficiaries even though the [majority of households on the waiting list](#) for housing assistance (60%) are families with children. We urge you to make additional and lasting investments in housing support to ensure all our children have a safe, affordable place to live and call home.

The American Jobs Plan includes \$100 billion in investments in public schools. These vital efforts to modernize the infrastructure of our schools must be accompanied by a robust investment in the students and teachers who use them. [Inequities and funding shortfalls](#) have long plagued our school system. Ensuring the promise of equal and supportive education will take targeted investments to fully fund programs such as Title I, IDEA, and McKinney Vento. [Through IDEA](#), for example, the federal government only paid for around [13% of the per student cost](#) for special education students during FY2020. This falls far short of the 40% Congress set out to cover in 1975. In addition, broadband investment should include designated funding for E-Rate and Lifeline programs to ensure students and school staff have access to the tools to learn and teach. Public schools are the backbones of our democracy, but chronic underfunding has crippled this institution.

The American Families plan would help to address the problem of child hunger by investing more than \$25 billion to make the Summer EBT demonstrations permanent and nationwide. It provides a modest grocery benefit in the summer for families whose children receive free low-cost school meals so they can have consistent access to nutrition during the hungriest time of the year, the summer months. It also would expand the community eligibility provision to increase access to nutritious school meals. These changes will allow the families of the 29 million children receiving free and reduced-price meals during the school year to purchase food during summer months and would provide an additional 9.3 million children with free school meals.

It is imperative that you pay special attention to the needs of children in your upcoming deliberations and priorities for FY 2022. In particular, the cornerstone of any investment in children must include a permanent extension of the ARP’s expansions of the Child Tax Credit, Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and Earned Income Tax Credit. It cannot be emphasized enough how important these changes will be to make a lasting impact on child well-being over the coming months, years, and decades. [Researchers from Columbia University](#) project that investment in a child allowance program will pay massive dividends, too – estimating an 8:1 return on investment. This is an opportunity to ensure a structural change in how we value our children for generations to come.

As a coalition, we remain ready to work with you towards ensuring a lasting, permanent focus on children’s needs during policy and budget deliberations. The progress that already has been made is significant, but it must be enduring and inclusive.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
Boys Town  
CET of Arkansas, LLC  
Child Care Aware® of America  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Aid  
Children's Health Fund  
Communities in Schools  
Connecticut Association for Human Services  
Deaconess, United Methodist Church  
Early Care and Education Consortium  
Families USA  
Family Focused Treatment Association  
First Focus on Children  
Institute for Educational Leadership  
Mental Health America  
MENTOR National  
Mid-South Health System  
National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement  
National Association of Counsel for Children  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Child Abuse Coalition  
National Child Care Association  
National Children's Campaign  
National Crittenton  
National Diaper Bank Network  
National Early Childhood Accreditation Program  
National Head Start Association (NHSA)  
National Respite Coalition  
National WIC Association  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Prevent Blindness  
Save the Children Action Network  
School-Based Health Alliance  
SchoolHouse Connection  
United Way Worldwide  
Youth Development Institute