

THE CHILDREN'S BUDGET COALITION

INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

December 6, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan and Democratic Leaders Reid & Pelosi:

The Children's Budget Coalition strongly opposes the decision to pass a second Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 17). Congress must return to "regular order" to ensure agencies have the resources to implement important programs for children and their families. In addition, it is critical Congress keeps its commitment to enact legislation by the end of the year to fund programs to assist Flint, Michigan and other communities affected by lead contamination.

Congress must no longer govern through enacting short-term CRs as there are several consequences including a reduction in effectiveness and efficiencies and delays in hiring and personnel actions. Funding delays invariably create additional work and cause agencies to take actions that compromise their efficiency and effectiveness. A CR requires the continuation of projects and activities that otherwise may need to be discontinued. In other words, a CR prohibits agencies from ceasing existing activities that are no longer deemed priorities while at the same time prohibiting them from tackling new priorities. For instance, the Department of Education would be unable to execute portions of The Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law No: 114-95) because its a new law.

Additionally, once a CR is enacted, agencies' budget offices and The White House Office of Management and Budget are involved in numerous discussions around budget execution. Much of this dialogue is to determine what's possible under a CR, and whether something is a continuation of a current activity or if it represents something new. These hours should be spent on advancing critical programs that impact the lives of children daily and not on managing consequences of a CR.

It is difficult for agencies to manage delays in funding without affecting personnel, particularly if continuing resolutions require agencies to spend at the prior year's level or lower. Hiring freezes are often employed as a means of controlling personnel costs. As positions become vacant in agencies that manage children's programs, agencies leave them unfilled anticipating the possibility of

insufficient funding to get the agency through the entire fiscal year. These unfilled positions can lead to further reductions in effectiveness and efficiencies of an agency and in implementing important programs for children and their families.

In the end, vulnerable children are harmed year after year by short-term CRs. The programs they depend on are not functioning as strongly and efficiently as they should, and consequently the safety net for them is weakened.

As for the lead crisis facing Flint, Michigan and other communities around the country, it is important that Congress funds programs to bring much needed assistance to the children of these communities. The CDC estimates there are half a million children ages 1-5 with elevated blood lead levels in the U.S. Lead is not safe for children at any level. Even trace amounts can cause irreversible damage to a child's brain development and nervous system. The lead poisoning of many children and families in Flint and other communities is unacceptable and we urge you to act now to pass the funding these communities desperately need to address current lead contamination and prevent it from occurring in schools and homes in the future.

The Children's Budget Coalition is composed of over 30 children focused organizations who collectively are committed to ensuring that our nation's leaders make robust federal investments in the critical programs that nurture children a top priority. Governing through a CR not only reduces the investment in children but is costly and extremely inefficient. We must restore "regular order" to what has become a broken appropriations process that has serious implications for our children. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure all our nation's children have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,