

November 14, 2013

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan, Chairman
House Budget Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Sessions, Ranking
Member
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, Ranking
Member
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Sessions, Representative Ryan, and Representative Van Hollen:

We the undersigned children's organizations write to urge you **to come to a budget agreement that first and foremost protects and invests in our nation's children. Any agreement should also prioritize undoing harmful sequestration cuts.**

Children and families across the nation are feeling the pain as discretionary investments that matter to children have been cut by more than \$4 billion dollars in fiscal year 2013 as a result of sequestration. As a result, more than 57,000 children have been kicked out of Head Start, more families are homeless because of housing cuts, and schools have reduced staff and services to students. In particular, children with special needs, and those living in low-income areas or near military bases or reservations have been hit hard because of cuts to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title I, and Impact Aid. Families once depending on emergency unemployment compensation are trying to do without. Funding for child welfare and protective services has also been compromised. This all comes on top of nearly \$2 billion in cuts to discretionary investments since 2010.

Protecting and strengthening mandatory investments for children is just as important. The Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid help to ensure that millions of children have health insurance and can get help when they are sick. According to the Census Bureau, both of these initiatives helped bring the uninsurance rate for children below nine percent in 2012.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other investments in Food Aid ensure that millions of children do not go hungry. In 2012, according to new data from the Census Bureau, SNAP lifted 2.2 million children out of poverty while the National School Lunch Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children helped lift another 900,000 children out of poverty. Tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit help millions of hardworking families. These credits lifted nearly five million children out of poverty

in 2012. If not for this safety net, more children across our nation would go hungry and more parents would know the powerless feeling of being unable to take a sick child to the doctor.

Unfortunately, investments in children have declined three years in a row and make up less than eight cents of every dollar spent by the federal government. When more than one in every five children lives in poverty, and a recent study showed that poor and low-income children now make up more than half the public school attendees in the South and West United States, this is not the time to pass any legislation that would jeopardize child well-being. Children are not the cause of our fiscal imbalance, and cutting the investments that help them grow is a shortsighted decision that threatens our future. **This is why we urge you to stop sequestration and invest in our most important asset, our children.**

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Federation of Teachers

Campaign for Youth Justice

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Health Fund

Easter Seals

First Focus Campaign for Children

MomsRising

National Association for the Education of Homeless Youth

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

National Child Abuse Coalition

National Education Association

National Head Start Association

National Title One Association

Public Advocacy for Kids

Save the Children

School Based Health Alliance

Share Our Strength

United Way

CC: All House & Senate Budget Conferees