



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

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December 20, 2012

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative:

The House is expected to vote today on two measures responsive to the “fiscal cliff” problem. The fiscal cliff puts critical investments in children at risk, so as children’s advocates, we commend efforts to find a solution. However, we caution you that a review of available information about the package fast-tracked for floor consideration today suggests that it will also result in significant harm to America’s investments in children.

The Permanent Tax Relief for Families and Small Businesses Act fails to extend improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) enacted in 2009. Together, these improvements lift one million children out of poverty. This EITC omission would result in a tax liability \$500 higher for 6.5 million families with children, and the CTC omission would result in a tax liability \$800 higher for 12 million families with children.

The Spending Reduction Act (H.R. 6684) would further cut the Child Tax Credit, denying the CTC to 5.5 million children whose parents file federal tax returns with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. Families affected by this provision earn an average of \$21,000 per year – well below the federal poverty line for a family of four.

H.R. 6684 would also make cuts to other initiatives that meet children’s basic needs:

- Repeals current law protecting children from state budget cuts that would undermine Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), denying health insurance to more than 300,000 children.
- Cuts \$36 billion from the Supplementation Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), which provides food to 20 million children. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that SNAP reduced the number of children in poverty by 1.7 million. An estimated 280,000 children receiving SNAP would also lose the National School Lunch Program under the legislation.
- Eliminates the Social Services Block Grant, which makes child care more affordable for the parents of 4 million children, funds child abuse prevention and response efforts that protect 1.7 million children, and finances foster care for 451,000 children victimized by abuse or neglect.

In addition, H.R. 6684 would require \$19 billion in cuts to federal fiscal year 2013 non-defense discretionary initiatives, and it would leave in place sequestration budget cuts to such initiatives for federal fiscal years 2014 through 2022. Children’s initiatives placed at risk under this provision include but are by no means limited to child abuse and neglect prevention and response, education for children with disabilities, mental health services for troubled children, assistance for homeless children, nutrition for pregnant women, new mothers, and babies, and immunizations and community health centers.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this important legislation with you. Please feel free to contact me or Jared Solomon at (202) 657-0679 or jareds@firstfocus.net. We urge you to insist upon a clear picture of the impact of this legislation on the children you represent before casting your vote today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce Lesley
President