

Last week Congress passed a \$1.1 trillion spending package, funding the government through September 30, 2015.

Children represent one-quarter of the population, yet the share of federal funding directed toward children has declined and today amounts to less than 8 percent of the overall budget.

Despite this, most children's programs only received level funding in this spending package, which are effective cuts due to inflation. Congress missed another opportunity to make substantial investments in children to improve outcomes in children's health, academic achievement, school readiness, economic opportunity and their ability to thrive.

Here are some of the provisions that have a particularly significant impact for kids:

## **NUTRITION**

The **National School Lunch and School Breakfast Nutrition Standards** were weakened, so schools that can show financial hardship are exempt from whole grain standards, and sodium restrictions are frozen at current levels. While these provisions do not weaken the nutrition standards as significantly as many proposals in the House of Representatives that were not included in the bill, they still weaken standards intended to improve children's nutrition. Health professionals and child nutrition experts should be making decisions about what constitutes nutritious school meals, not Congress. If schools and school districts are suffering financial hardship to meet the new standards, Congress should ensure that schools have the resources necessary to meet these important standards rather than watering down the standards that promote child health.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food package** must now include white potatoes. Similar to making school nutrition standards, this is a decision that should be left to nutrition experts and scientists, not Congress.

## **EDUCATION**

Overall education funding was cut \$166 million compared to FY2014 and funding for education programs is still well below pre-sequestration levels. For example, **Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act**, one of the largest discretionary programs for children and youth, is intended to provide financial assistance to school districts and schools serving low-income children. It received a \$25 million increase over FY2014. Because of inflation, this is essentially flat funding and well below pre-sequestration levels.

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** will now include a question to identify youth who are in the foster care system or former foster youth and notify these students about their eligibility for federal student aid available to foster youth and former foster youth. This is an easy, no-cost solution to help lower barriers to higher education that many youth in foster care and former foster youth face.

## **CHILD WELFARE**

The **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)** which provides funding for child abuse prevention programs, did not receive an increase in funding despite being historically underfunded. The program is slated to be reauthorized this year.

The Administration's proposal for a new five-year **Demonstration to Address Over-Prescription of Psychotropic Medications for Children in Foster Care** was not funded. This initiative was proposed as a collaborative effort involving the Administration for Children and Families and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It was designed to encourage States to provide evidence-based psychosocial interventions to children and youth in foster care, to reduce over-prescription of psychotropic medications that are disproportionately prescribed to foster children and improve outcomes for these young people.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

Funding for the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** which was recently reauthorized after 18 years, has been increased by \$75 million. However, the increased funding for the CCDBG is inadequate to address the new safety and other requirements of the legislation. As a result, children and families, who in many states were already experiencing long waiting periods, may have less access to subsidies to help fund quality day care services they need to maintain employment and ensure that their children are in appropriate day care settings. Without additional resources, children and families will likely be unable to afford daycare services. Congress needs to increase funding for the CCDBG by at least \$300 million, the estimated amount needed to fund the additional safety requirements and provide subsidies to the current level of children and families.

### HEALTH

The **Children's Health Insurance Program** is an American success story that last year provided health coverage to 8.4 million children across the country. CHIP funding is scheduled to expire until the end of September 2015 and there is urgency to extend CHIP funding as soon as possible for states are already putting together their budgets, negotiating contracts with health plans, and those health plans are, in turn, putting together their pediatric provider networks for FY 2016. Yet Congress missed this opportunity to extend CHIP funding, and it is essential they extend it early in the 114th Congress.

### UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

The **Office of Refugee Resettlement**, the agency within the Department of Health and Human Services responsible for the care of unaccompanied migrant children, received an additional \$80 million in 2015 to provide children with critical health and education services. The agency also received \$14 million to support school districts working with new immigrant students. These common sense investments are needed to ensure the safety and overall well-being of migrant children.