



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

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February 21, 2018

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that emphasizes the need to make children a priority in federal budget and policymaking decisions. With the recent passage of the Bipartisan Budget Agreement of 2018 (BBA), we are writing to urge you to appoint Members of Congress to the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform who will work to create a budget process that prioritizes children.

Our nation is facing a number of enormous challenges – demographic changes due to a rapidly aging Baby Boomer generation and a declining share of younger generations to support them, increasing international competition for which our nation must be prepared, a large national debt that we will be asking our children to pay off, and yet, a declining share of investments made in these younger generations to reach their full potential to meet these rising challenges. The Urban Institute projects that federal spending on interest on the national debt will soon exceed all federal investment in our children. If our federal budget is an indication of our national priorities, we are not doing what is necessary to meet the future threats and opportunities that confront the country.

As you know, the 2018 BBA specifically authorizes each of you to appoint four members to the select committee not later than fourteen calendar days after the date of enactment of this Act. As February 23, 2018 approaches, we ask that you each appoint members to this select committee who have consistently championed children's issues and supported critical programs that impact children's development and well-being.

Children represent nearly a quarter of America's population, yet they continue to receive a declining share of total federal spending, with that number reaching an all-time low of 7.75 percent in Fiscal

Year 2017. This trend is unacceptable, wrong for our children, and our country's economic future. We know that robust investment in our children reaps many near-and long-term benefits including, improved school performance, better health, higher earning potential, and increased opportunities for parents to participate in the workforce. We need to make investments that ensure that every child lives in a household with resources sufficient to meet their basic needs and support their healthy development. The members of the Joint Select Committee will be making recommendations for legislation to reform our budget and appropriations process. This is a critical opportunity to elevate children's needs and reverse the backwards and harmful spending trend for our children.

Children represent one-quarter of the population but all of our future. We respectfully request that this select committee includes Members of Congress who have demonstrated a commitment to understanding and valuing the importance of investing in our nation's children and our future through our federal policy process.

We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "B" and "L".

Bruce Lesley
President