The Kid Angle
Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Aid to children ends as COVID cases soar
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Poverty-slashing aid to children ends...

Tomorrow will mark the first time since summer that families go without their monthly tax rebate of up to $300 per child. Congress — which increased and restructured the annual lump sum Child Tax Credit as a monthly advance to help families meet recurring financial obligations — simply let the improvements expire. West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a Democrat who blocked continuation of the improved credit, worried that low-income families would spend the money on drugs.

Fun fact: Parents of most of the 61 million children receiving the payment actually spent it on food, rent, utilities, education and other necessities. See below.
We’d like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that the Child Tax Credit was conceived in 1991 by a bipartisan commission, enacted in 1997 by President Bill Clinton and a Republican-led Congress, and has been regularly improved by Republican and Democratic presidents since then, including Donald Trump, With whom nearly every Republican sided.

So what’s different now? Why all the disagreement? Maybe it’s the fact that the latest improvements to the CTC:

- Kept nearly 4 million children out of poverty
- Included 26 million low-income children who previously went without the credit because their families made too little money
- Fed hungry children
Increased equity for Black and Hispanic children and other children of color

Tax breaks and increased fairness apparently are very important to some members of Congress — as long as the recipients aren’t children, and especially, aren’t poor children.

...As pediatric COVID infections soar

Pediatric COVID infections continue to rise exponentially, according to doctors, hospitals and government trackers, breaking records for cases and hospitalizations.

More than 580,000 pediatric COVID cases were reported for the week ending Jan. 6, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a 78% increase over the previous week — and triple the number of reported cases two weeks earlier. Nearly 8.5 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, AAP reports, with nearly 11% of these cases added in the past two weeks.

Cases among children ages 4 and younger — who are not eligible for the vaccine — reached a seven-day average of more than 4 in 100,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control, roughly double the rate of the previous month.

The Biden Administration has taken some positive steps to get eligible children vaccinated, which is recommended by the AAP. But clearly, the country needs a comprehensive, child-focused plan to address the specific needs and challenges of reaching this group. A plan like the one First Focus on Children has repeatedly called for, most recently in August.

Vaccine uptake among eligible children (ages 5 to 17) has been disappointingly low. As of Jan. 5, just 25% of children 5-11 had received at least one dose of the vaccine, and just over half of children 12-17 (53%) were fully vaccinated.

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