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March 21, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris:

Every year, First Focus on Children, alongside the children's community, acknowledges the 2nd Sunday of June as Children's Day and the start of Children's Week. Children's Week is an opportunity for child advocates to come together to raise awareness of the issues impacting children and share proposed policy solutions.

It is clear your Administration recognizes that children are a vulnerable population which require unique policy solutions. Within the first year, the Biden-Harris White House has been able to accomplish so much for children. The expanded Child Tax Credit enacted through the American Rescue Plan dramatically reduced child poverty— an issue known to negatively affect nearly every other aspect of a child's life. Your American Families Plan was one of the strongest proposals for kids ever put forth by a president, and your proposed FY2021 budget reversed the downward spending trend of the federal share allocated to kids from historic lows under the Trump Administration to the highest recorded level by First Focus on Children.

At a time when attacks on children are being weaponized for political gain across the country, your Administration's leadership in prioritizing the true needs of kids is so important. Children and families need an agenda that supports their schools, betters child health, increases economic supports through tax credits, lowers costs for essential items like child care, and overall advances child well-being. The Biden-Harris Administration has made progress in all of these areas within the first year, but more work exists to create permanent change for kids.

We would like to invite the White House to join in celebrating Children's Week and build on the progress achieved for kids within your first year of office through the following actions:

1. **Issue a Presidential Proclamation, Declaring the 2nd Sunday in June to be National Children's Day and the Week Following as Children's Week in the U.S.**, in an effort to focus national and political conversations on the needs of children. Advocates across the country recognize the 2nd Sunday in June as National Children's Day and celebrate the week that follows as Children's Week. During the week, the children's community strives to address the challenges facing children and families, and discuss the role that families and society have in improving their now and future. This year, Children's Week falls on June 12-18.

2. **Participate in a Children’s Week Event.** Throughout Children’s Week, First Focus on Children will host a series of events in collaboration with other advocates, policy experts, and elected officials. We would like to work with the White House to build an event that allows the Administration to share the positive impact the Biden-Harris Administration is having for children and families, and announce any further children’s agenda items.
3. **Use Executive Action to Support Children.** Children’s Week presents a special opportunity to build on the progress already made. Below are suggested executive actions that can be taken by the Administration during Children’s Week. We would welcome and celebrate additional items outside of this list that further your children’s agenda and address the needs of kids.

- **Increase Federal Agency Coordination:** The intersectionality of the issues children face warrant increased coordination in our response efforts. A **Children’s Cabinet** would allow for better coordination in addressing the needs of the whole child, as opposed to matters being handled independently across multiple agencies and departments. A Children’s Cabinet would also lead to better implementation of services, and ensure the needs of children are being considered at the highest levels of government.

First Focus on Children also supports additional structural improvements that benefit kids, including creating a **White House Office of Children** and supporting an **Interagency Coordinating Council** in the Department of Health and Human Services. These offices are essential to strengthening the whole-of-government approach to protecting children.

- **Refocus on Child Poverty:** The expanded Child Tax Credit of 2021 took the country a long way in reducing child poverty. Unfortunately, progress on this issue has been sidetracked by members of Congress. Children’s Week is an opportunity to refocus efforts on lowering child poverty rates by setting a **National Poverty Reduction Target** to cut child poverty in half within a decade. A target is an essential tool to maintaining progress in poverty reduction and remaining accountable to children.

A **White House Conference on Child Poverty** would also help bring attention back to the issue. A conference provides the opportunity to analyze existing data, address barriers to action, and share facts on the impacts of child poverty— including the economic costs it imposes on the country, and the negative effects poverty holds for children in the immediate and their future outcomes.

- **Prioritize the Needs of Children in All Policy:** A special consideration to children should be given before the implementation of policy. Encouraging **Child Impact Statements** from government agencies and independent entities, and creating a process for these statements to be submitted and reviewed, would help answer fundamental questions for how policy may benefit or harm children. Adopting a **Best Interest of the Child Standard** across the executive branch would prioritize attention to the protection and safety of kids in federal initiatives.

We hope the Biden-Harris Administration will join in celebrating children and recommitting to their success at this year’s Children’s Week. Your Administration has shown great leadership for kids within the first year, and we look forward to continuing to work alongside you to better the lives of children.

For coordination regarding Children’s Week or any other matter, please contact our Senior Director of Public Affairs, Haley Winter at HaleyW@FirstFocus.org.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley

Bruce Lesley
President