



1400 Eye Street NW Suite 450 | Washington DC 20005 | t. 202.657.0670 | f. 202.657.0671 | www.firstfocus.org

January 27, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

The State of the Union address presents an opportunity to communicate directly to the American people, Congress, and the world, to share recent accomplishments, and priorities for the year to come. On behalf of children, First Focus on Children writes to encourage the highlighting of children in this year's address.

The needs of children are often left out of the political discourse. We were encouraged to see that from the moment your Administration entered office this was not the case. The Biden-Harris Administration set forth to accomplish a plan that First Focus on Children said had the potential to be "the most important piece of legislation for children and families, ever." Unfortunately, as is often the case with children's legislation, when negotiations got tough, kids were left behind. The Build Back Better Act included 436 mentions of children whereas the final Inflation Reduction Act included just 1 meaningful mention.

Children, especially historically marginalized children, continue to suffer from the reverberations of COVID-19. A mental health crisis among children and adolescents escalated as children experienced isolation and increased stress. Remote learning led to educational learning loss and wiped out academic gains for many children. Households with children continue to disproportionately struggle to afford rent, food, and other basic needs, especially as costs of these necessities remain high. Supply chain disruptions affected availability of essential items for children, like baby formula and medicine.

We ask that you use this opportunity to refocus attention on children, through celebrating the impact recent legislation will have for children, as well as outlining next steps that are needed to ensure progress continues for kids.

Some of the biggest accomplishments of the past year include the historic investments in addressing climate change, and the attention given to the gun violence and mental health epidemics. The investments in climate will benefit children not only as they are the generation who will be most impacted by inaction, but also because of the increased health risks children face from environmental pollutants and disasters. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is also an example of how protecting our children can be a unifying force for bipartisan cooperation. While much more remains to be done to protect our children, Republicans and Democrats came together to invest in mental health infrastructure, and pass the first meaningful gun violence legislation in years.

Department actions, such as fixing the "Family Glitch," also held positive implications for children and families. Until recently, children and other family members of employees were either going without health insurance coverage or paying hundreds of dollars a month for premiums in the private insurance marketplace because they were not eligible for premium tax credits under the ACA.

We ask that you not only uplift the ways children are uniquely impacted by these issues and the significant policies enacted, but also call for the next steps that are needed.

The State of the Union offers an opportunity to explicitly state ways in which the progress of this Administration can be built upon to benefit children. At last year's State of the Union, you spoke to the life-changing impact capping the cost of Insulin would have on Type-1 diabetics. While we join in celebrating the cap passed in the reconciliation bill for older Americans, it is time to extend this price cap to children who need life-saving insulin through the Pass the Affordable Insulin Now Act. Children, like Joshua Davis, who was a distinguished guest at last year's State of the Union, deserve relief from high priced life-saving prescription drugs.

Another great accomplishment of this White House is the breathing room provided to American families. We are seeing inflation moderating and gas prices come down thanks to the actions of the Biden-Harris Administration. However, no policy had a greater impact on kitchen table economics than the improved Child Tax Credit. The enhanced, monthly credit helped families meet essential costs, improved child health and nutrition, cut child poverty and had many secondary positive effects on children and families. We appreciate the White House's continuous public support for the widely popular credit, and hope that the State of the Union will again be an opportunity to speak to the importance of the Child Tax Credit and call on Congress to reinstate improvements to the Child Tax Credit.

As the examples of this letter demonstrate, in order for progress to be made for children, there must be a very intentional effort to prioritize and include them. The American people are unified in this—a [May 2022 poll](#), conducted by Lake Research Partners, found that voters want federal policy that centers children and invests in their well-being. We urge you to use the State of the Union to encourage Congress to unify behind children. We look forward to working alongside the Administration this year, and hope that the State of the Union serves as a strong foundation for uplifting and prioritizing the needs of all children.

Please consider First Focus on Children a resource for all child-related matters.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President, First Focus on Children