



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

A budget preview about values March 2, 2023

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One week from today, President Biden is scheduled to release his proposed budget for FY 2024.

*[UN-Trigger warning: Today's newsletter will **not** mention the debt ceiling.....except here, just now...]*

The President has often noted that a [budget is a statement of values](#) — “Don’t tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value,” he has been quoted saying.

For the last three years, President Biden has illustrated that he values children with budgets that invest in income supports such as the enhanced the Child Tax Credit, high-quality affordable child care, improved access to physical and mental health services for children, education, nutrition, and many other areas and programs that affect children.

In FY 2021, our 15th edition of the [Children’s Budget](#) found that emergency pandemic funding fueled the **largest year-to-year increase in the share of federal spending on kids** since tracking began in 2006. The share of federal spending on children rose to **11.2% in 2021, a 3.5 percentage point increase over 2020**.

Under the President’s leadership, champions for children in Congress, **pushed the share of spending on children to an historic 11.98% of the U.S. budget in FY 2022, as detailed in our [Children’s Budget 2022](#)**, producing remarkable declines in child poverty, hunger and the rate of children without health insurance.

[These gains stand in stark contrast to the pre-pandemic environment for children](#), when investments shrank for four consecutive years, coming in at just 7.55% of the federal budget by FY 2020.

Our budget team at First Focus on Children expects that as in previous years, the President’s FY 2024 request will be the high-water mark for proposed spending on children.

In negotiations of yore, children’s programs have always been the first to go when the going gets tough. [In 2009, the Senate recommended a \\$100 billion reduction in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) (the Great Recession’s stimulus package) — nearly half of which came from programs that specifically help children, such as Head Start, school construction, education for disadvantaged children, and prevention programs. [In 2018, the Trump Administration singled out the Children’s Health Insurance Program](#) — which serves 10 million children — to achieve nearly half of all the cuts in its proposed rescission or “clawback” package.

As a nation, we have never been able to afford these cuts to children's well-being. But disinvesting in our children now will cruelly pull the rug out from under them just as they're regaining their foothold.

Congress has already begun rolling back these game-changing investments, with [inflation-adjusted dollars for children dropping nearly 17% between FY 2021 and FY 2022](#). If past is prologue, House leaders will also take their promised cuts for FY 2024 out of children's hides.

To do so would be short-sighted. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed decades of deferred maintenance on the systems that protect and nurture our next generation. The pandemic is receding, but the emergency of our children's well-being is not.

At a bare minimum, we would urge Congress to at least meet the President's commitment to children — and to resist rolling back the gains children have made. Our baseline should not be what we have done in the past, but what we have learned is possible.



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