Happy February. Lots coming up for kids this month:

**Next steps on the Child Tax Credit:**
Children won an important, if partial, victory with last night’s House passage of the expanded Child Tax Credit. Now it’s up to the Senate: Under no circumstances should lawmakers water down this bill. We’re particularly concerned about maintaining the lookback provision and the attempts to exclude children of immigrants. “Lawmakers must squash any temptation to water down these “just-enough” benefits in the tax bill by asking themselves 'Is this good for children?'” said First Focus Campaign for Children President Bruce Lesley.

**Paid Family Leave:**
A bipartisan and (get this) bicameral group of lawmakers has been gathering input on strategies and priorities for expanding access to paid family leave. First Focus on Children outlined for the working group of 14 lawmakers the tremendous benefits that paid family leave offers children. For example, research has shown that paid family leave:

- Improves infant and child brain and language development regardless of socioeconomic status
- Significantly increases breastfeeding rates and reduces incidences of postpartum depression
- Reduces infant mortality rates, which are disproportionately high in the United States. Experts estimate that a 12-week paid leave program would result in at least 600 fewer infant and post-neonatal deaths per year
- Improves maternal and infant health through decreased rates of intimate partner violence and rehospitalization, and increased pediatric health visits and immunizations

To be truly effective, First Focus on Children has told the working group that a federal paid leave program should cover time for parental bonding, a worker’s own health condition, caregiving for seriously ill loved ones, needs related to military deployment, and to address sexual and domestic violence, and should also consider including bereavement leave for the loss of a child. The next step is for these lawmakers to draft legislation, which supposedly will come this year.
Prescribing away child poverty: “Rx Kids” launches Feb. 14
Our newest “Speaking of Kids” podcast brings a conversation with Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the pediatrician and activist best known for exposing the deadly levels of lead in the Flint, MI water supply. Dr. Mona, as she’s known, discusses her new initiative, Rx Kids, a groundbreaking program that offers universal, unconditional financial support to pregnant women and to children during their first 12 months of life. Created with Professor Luke Shaefer from the Poverty Solutions initiative at the University of Michigan, Rx Kids grew out of Dr. Mona’s desire to “prescribe away poverty.” The program starts February 14.

Happy birthday! How’s your health insurance?
To be filed under “Did you know?“: When parents fail to choose a health insurance plan for their child before birth, that child is automatically covered under the policy held by the parent whose birthday comes first in the calendar year. Regardless of whether that policy is best for the child and/or most affordable for the family. Crazy, right? First Focus Campaign for Children is working with lawmakers to pass the Empowering Parents’ Healthcare Choices Act, which would give parents up to 60 days after the birth of a child to choose which insurance policy will cover their new baby. Even better, it would give the Administration authority to instruct insurers on how and when to notify parents of their rights. More on that here.

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