When President Biden takes the podium for next week’s State of the Union address, he should aim to accomplish one specific goal: **Convince Congress to intervene in the crisis afflicting the nation’s 72 million children.**

The crisis can be outlined as follows:

- **Child and teen mortality** increased by 20% between 2019 and 2021 in the U.S., the largest increase in 50 years. The following year, the U.S. **infant mortality rate, already much higher than in other wealthy nations, increased for the first time in two decades.**
- **Roughly 10% of all U.S. children — 7.3 million kids — did not have enough food to keep them healthy in 2022,** with food insecurity significantly higher in households with children that included a Black or Hispanic adult.
- **Child poverty more than doubled in 2022** compared to 2021, with the rate of children living in poverty increasing from 5.2% to 12.4%.
- Children are in the midst of a mental health crisis, with **suicide as the second most common cause of death among children aged 10-14.** Firearms are the number one cause of death.
- At least **4 million children have lost their health care coverage,** mainly due to administrative issues within Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

President Biden has accomplished a great deal for children during his three years in office, much of it during a worldwide health and economic emergency. His Administration has made **historic investments in climate change, meaningful progress on gun violence and improvements to children’s health care.** Recent efforts have further removed barriers to mental health care for children, mitigated childhood toxins such as lead, and improved the economic stability of children.

But these improvements are only a beginning, not an end. In a letter to the Administration this week, **First Focus on Children urged the president to use his State of the Union address to announce new initiatives for our nation’s children and to call on Congress to get behind them.** Some specific initiatives might include:
Announcing a **Child Poverty Reduction Target** issued through Executive Order

- Urging Congress to **fully fund WIC** and to reject false choices around children’s nutrition programs
- Increase funding for children globally, as **only 9 cents of every dollar of foreign assistance benefits children internationally**
- Protect the Children’s Health Insurance Program from future risks by **endorsing the CHIPP Act**. CHIP is currently the only federal health insurance program that is not permanently funded.
- Reverse some of the ill effects of the unwinding by asking Congress to pass legislation that would **ensure that kids enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP can remain continuously eligible until they turn six years old**.

The State of the Union address will come **two days after the nation’s definitive Super Tuesday primary races**. No matter the outcome of those races, polling has consistently shown that Americans — **regardless of party, gender, race, or other demographics** — want a positive children’s agenda.

President Biden has nothing to lose — and lots to gain — by delivering this agenda in his State of the Union address.
Union address.

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