

July 29, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable John Boehner  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leaders,

In this country, we don't kick people when they're down, particularly children. Today, millions of American families and children face the possibility that they won't have enough food to eat or enough money to pay for the supplies needed for back to school. In these tough economic times, programs that lend a hand to families down on their luck are more important than ever. That is why we, the undersigned groups, ask you to hold children harmless in any deal to raise the debt ceiling.

As August 2<sup>nd</sup> quickly approaches and we debate raising the debt ceiling and the economic future of our nation, we must not forget to think about those who will be called on to create our future prosperity. Right now in America, one in four children relies on food stamps, eight million children lack health insurance, and 1.3 million students drop out of school every year. And as a result of the recession, 43 percent of families with children report that they are struggling to afford stable housing. The poverty rate for kids in this country will soon hit 25 percent, the largest generation to grow up in hard times since the depression.

The American people recognize this crisis. Polling done by Greenberg-Quinlan and First Focus, shows that by a nearly 3-1 margin (58%-20%), American voters believe that the lives of children have gotten worse rather than better over the last ten years. Americans are deeply concerned that the generation growing up today will not have the same opportunities to achieve the American Dream. It's time for us as a nation to regain our focus.

If we do not raise the debt ceiling, we know the effects for children and families will be catastrophic. The federal government will have to choose between paying children's health insurance and paying military families the benefits they are owed. Interest rates will rise, so it will be harder for families to get a mortgage or borrow money to send a child to college. Businesses will be squeezed with higher expenses, meaning it will be more difficult to create well paying jobs. Finally, the costs of everyday items like fuel and food will go up, making it even harder for folks to provide for their families.

Inaction is not an option. However, we know that deficit reduction cannot and should not be accomplished on the backs of children. We need to hold children and families harmless. Already, spending on children makes up less than 10 percent of total federal spending. A cut from this small slice will barely dent the deficit while having dire consequences for the people who need the biggest helping hand.

Americans recognize that our national deficit must be addressed, but oppose balancing the budget on the backs of kids. In polling, voters overwhelmingly reject major cuts to K-12 education, child nutrition, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, Head Start, and college student loans. It is in our nation's best interest to raise the healthiest, most educated, best-prepared children in the world for the challenges that lie ahead. If we want to recapture the American Dream, we cannot afford to fail them. That is why we, the undersigned groups, again ask you to hold children harmless in any deal to raise the debt ceiling.

Sincerely,

### **National Organizations**

Afterschool Alliance

All Education Matters

Alliance for a Just Society

Alliance for Children and Families

American Association of School Administrators

American School Counselor Association

Association of Education Service Agencies

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Child and Family Policy Center

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Dental Health Project

Citizen Schools

CLASP

Council of the Great City Schools

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

Early Care & Education Consortium

Easter Seals

Every Child Matters Education Fund

Family Voices, Inc

First Five Years Fund

First Focus Campaign for Children

Forum for Youth Investment

Foster Family-based Treatment Association

FosterClub

IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association

International Reading Association

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Mental Health America

MomsRising

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Black Child Development Institute

National Center on Family Homelessness

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

National Education Association

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

National Head Start Association

National Human Services Assembly

National Indian Child Welfare Association

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty

National Organization of State Associations for Children

National PTA

National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition

National Rural Education Association

Nurse Family Partnerships

Public Education Network

Save the Children

School Social Work Association of America

The Children's Partnership

The Council for Exceptional Children

The Magnet Schools of America

United Neighborhoods Centers of America

Voices for America's Children

YouthBuild

Zero to Three

## **Local Organizations**

Action for North Carolina Children

Advocates for Children and Youth (MD)

Beckett Family Consulting (NH)

California Children's Hospital Association

Center for Public Policy Priorities (TX)

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Children First Oregon

Children Now (CA)

Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

Children's Defense Fund - Texas

Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland (CA)

Children's Specialty Care Coalition (CA)

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc.

Connecticut Association for Human Services

Early Childhood Investment Corporation in Michigan

Family Based Services Association of New Jersey

Family Voices of New Jersey

Family Voices of North Dakota

Healthy Montana Kids

**HEAR US Inc (IL)**

Kentucky Youth Advocates

Massachusetts Citizens for Children

Maine Children's Alliance

Maternal and Child Health Access (CA)

Michigan's Children

Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies

New Mexico Voices for Children

Oklahoma Foster Family Treatment Association

PACER Center (MN)

Partnership for Children (MO)

Pegasus Legal Services for Children (NM)

Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council (CA)

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation (HI)

SHELBY Child Impact Assessment (TN)

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey

Vermont Family Networks

Voices for Alabama's Children

Voices for Children in Nebraska

Voices for Illinois Children

Voices for Ohio's Children

Voices for Utah Children

Voices for Vermont's Children

Voices for Virginia's Children