

HOMELAND INSECURITY

Why new investments in children and youth must be a priority
for the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress

Dear Reader,

January, 2009

As President Obama and the 111th Congress struggle with worldwide economic problems, ending two wars, and rebuilding the nation's physical infrastructure, it would be easy to postpone the critical new investments America needs to make in its children. And an already challenging situation for children is compounded by state budgets staggering under the recession and the cuts in social spending which follow.

But make no mistake, the development of human capital is central to U.S. global competitiveness, increased productivity, caring for an aging population, and fulfilling the moral obligation every generation has to leave the world a better place for the one that follows. This is not the time to step backwards.

The life chances of children are vastly improved when they are the top priority of families, communities—and governments. Most U.S. children live in secure environments and sail into young adulthood healthy, becoming productive members of society. But as the numbers in this report show, this happy ending eludes millions of children.

The data which follow focus on a few key issues: health, child abuse, imprisonment, school readiness, child care, afterschool, and poverty. These are big issues affecting millions of children and families. There are others, equally important, which we have not addressed. The disturbing trends in the data presented are understated. Although they are the most recent available, they lag by at least a year the sharp downturn in the economy and its impact on families.

We can all agree: families are the best place for children, but often families need a little help. The private sector is an essential ally—but it lacks the resources to match the needs of millions of children. State and local governments are critical players, but vast disparities in child well-being among states confirm the need for a national government which promotes a level playing field for all children.

To spotlight the need for smart new national investments in our children, the Every Child Matters Education Fund is waging a public education campaign to win support for proven health and social programs. Our goal is to make homeland security a reality for all children and families. Please join us in assisting the President and the Congress with their duty to make certain *every child matters*.

Michael R. Petit
President, Every Child Matters Education Fund

HOMELAND INSECURITY

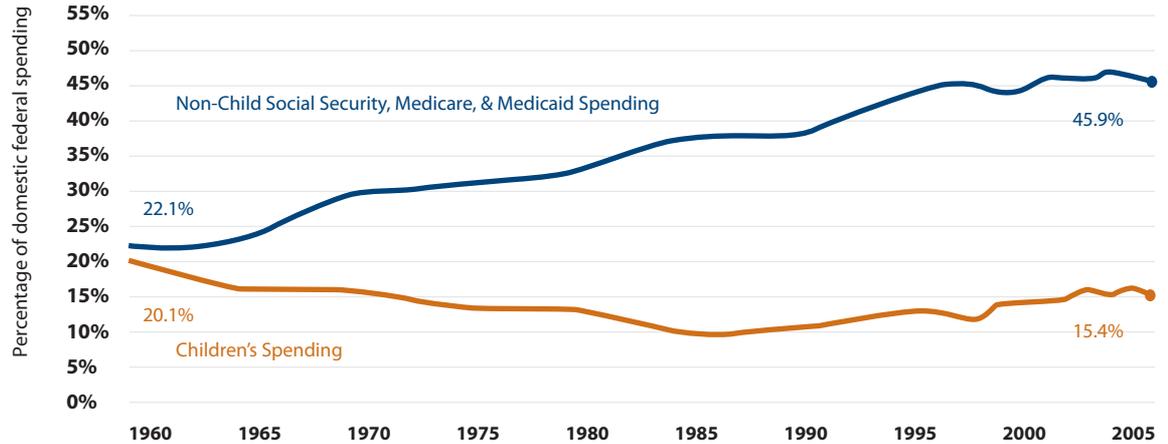
A REALITY FOR MILLIONS OF CHILDREN

8 MILLION American children are without health insurance, more than 3 MILLION are reported abused and neglected, nearly 2 MILLION have parents in prison, and 13 MILLION live in poverty's grip.

A key ingredient in creating the nation's great wealth has long been its willingness to invest in new opportunities for all its children, helping them become productive members of society. But in recent decades, as seen in Chart 1.1, national investments in a wide range of children's health and social programs have been declining as a percentage of domestic spending in the federal budget.

Federal Spending on Children and Major Entitlements as a Share of Domestic Federal Spending

1960-2005 • Chart 1.1¹



One result of declining rates of spending on children is that the well-being of children in the United States ranks a poor 20th among 21 rich democracies according to a recent UNICEF report.

UNICEF Ranking of Child Well-being in Rich Democracies

Chart 1.2²

1	Netherlands	12	Canada
2	Sweden	13	Greece
3	Denmark	14	Poland
4	Finland	15	Czech Republic
5	Spain	16	France
6	Switzerland	17	Portugal
7	Norway	18	Austria
8	Italy	19	Hungary
9	Ireland	20	United States
10	Belgium	21	United Kingdom
11	Germany		

And within the United States itself, wide gaps in child well-being exist among the states: compared to the states with the best outcomes for children, children in the bottom states are three times as likely to die before their fourteenth birthday, five times as likely to be without health insurance, eight times as likely to be incarcerated, and thirteen times as likely to die from child abuse.

Yet, alarmingly, relative spending on children is projected to decline still further for the next decade, as seen in [Chart 1.3](#).

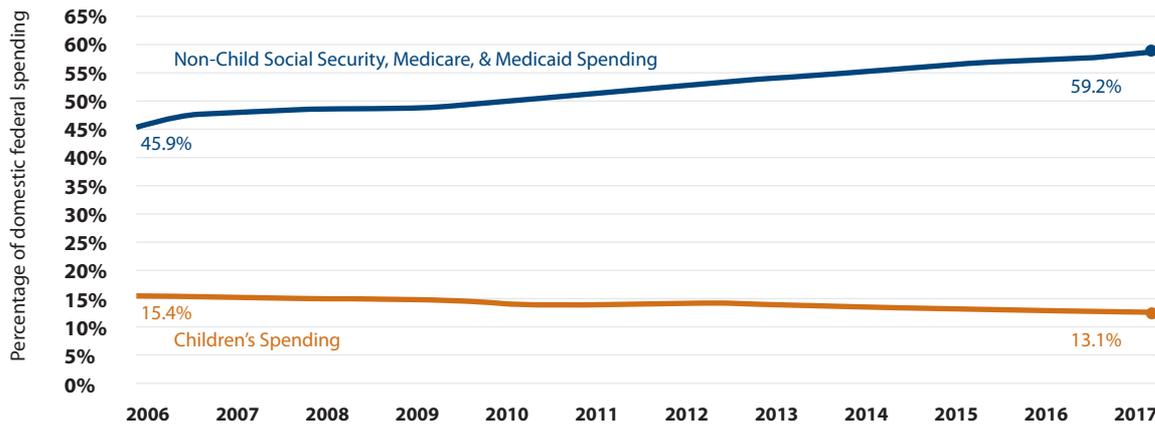
This is not what the public wants. Repeated polling commissioned by Every Child Matters shows that across the nation and across the political spectrum voters support new national investments in children. That’s because the public knows intuitively what all research confirms: spending on kids has a great return on investment. It keeps the U.S. competitive in a global market. It allows better support for an aging population. It prevents minor problems from becoming major. And it fulfills a moral commitment every generation has to those which follow.

WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS.

Lack of health care, abuse and neglect, imprisonment, poverty—these conditions confront American children on a scale unknown in the other rich democracies. These countries, competitors and allies alike, recognize that smart investments which pull all children and families forward benefit everyone. It’s time for America to make a renewed commitment to this same great goal.

Federal Spending on Children and Major Entitlements as a Share of Domestic Federal Spending

2006-2017 • Chart 1.3³



Rx FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN

START WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

Eight million children at any moment are without health insurance.⁴ Almost all have at least one parent who works full-time. Over a two-year period, nearly 27 million children will have no coverage for at least some of the time.⁵ In no other rich country does such a condition exist.

Uninsured children are almost five times more likely to delay medical care and four to five times as likely to go without eyeglasses or medicines.⁶ Some lose their hearing because a preventable infection was not treated. Many are not immunized against easily preventable communicable diseases. Simple health problems become major ones.

As seen in Chart 2.1, the U.S. ranks last among the rich democracies on the two most important health measures—infant mortality and longevity—even though we spend much more on medical care. Virtually all citizens in the other rich democracies are insured. More than 47 million⁷ Americans are not, which helps explain why nearly half of all U.S. bankruptcies involve medical bills.

How the U.S. Compares to Other Rich Democracies on Key Health Measures • Chart 2.1⁸

G7 Countries	Infant Mortality Rate 2006, per 1000 Live Births	Life Expectancy at Birth in years, 2006	Per capita spending on Health
Italy	3	81	\$2,623
Japan	3	83	\$2,514
France	4	81	\$3,554
Germany	4	80	\$3,328
Canada	5	81	\$3,672
United Kingdom	5	79	\$2,784
United States	7	78	\$6,714



And as can be seen in Charts 2.2 and 2.3, wide variations in access to health care and in health care outcomes exist among the states. The life and death of children should not be influenced by the state in which they live. But they are.

Percent of Children Uninsured

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 2.2⁹

State	% of Children Uninsured (Census 2007)	
	Percent	Rank
Massachusetts	3.0	1
West Virginia	4.6	2
Hawaii	4.8	3
Iowa	4.8	3
Maine	5.0	5
South Carolina	14.2	46
Nevada	14.2	46
New Mexico	15.6	48
Florida	19.2	49
Texas	21.4	50

Chart 2.2 shows how children in the bottom 5 states are 3.5 times as likely to be uninsured as children in the top 5. A Texas child is 7 times as likely to be uninsured as a child in Massachusetts.

Deaths of Children 1-14

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 2.3¹⁰

State	Rank	Deaths per 100,000 Children 1-14
New Hampshire	1	8
Massachusetts	2	10
New Jersey	3	14
Connecticut	3	14
Minnesota	5	15
Arkansas	45	29
South Dakota	45	29
New Mexico	47	31
Mississippi	49	33
Louisiana	50	34

Chart 2.3 shows that a child in the bottom states is 2.7 times as likely to die by the age of 14 as a child in the top states. Louisiana children are 4 times as likely to die by the age of 14 as New Hampshire children.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A DARK SIDE OF AMERICA...

In 2006 at least 1,530 children died as a result of abuse or neglect at home. The true number may be double that figure.¹¹ 78% of the fatalities were children under age four — mostly infants and toddlers.¹²

With three million reports of abuse and neglect each year, it isn't surprising that polls show deep public concern about the problem. But stopping child abuse is not a political priority even though it claims the lives of thousands, ruins the lives of millions, and costs taxpayers more than \$100 billion annually¹³ on related crime, imprisonment, mental health, special education, medical care, and drug abuse.

The amount of help an abused child receives is largely an accident of geography; some states do a much better job than others. No states are in full compliance with federal child welfare standards.¹⁴ As shown in Chart 3.1, the difference spent on protecting children among states is dramatic.

Per Capita Spending to Protect Abused Children

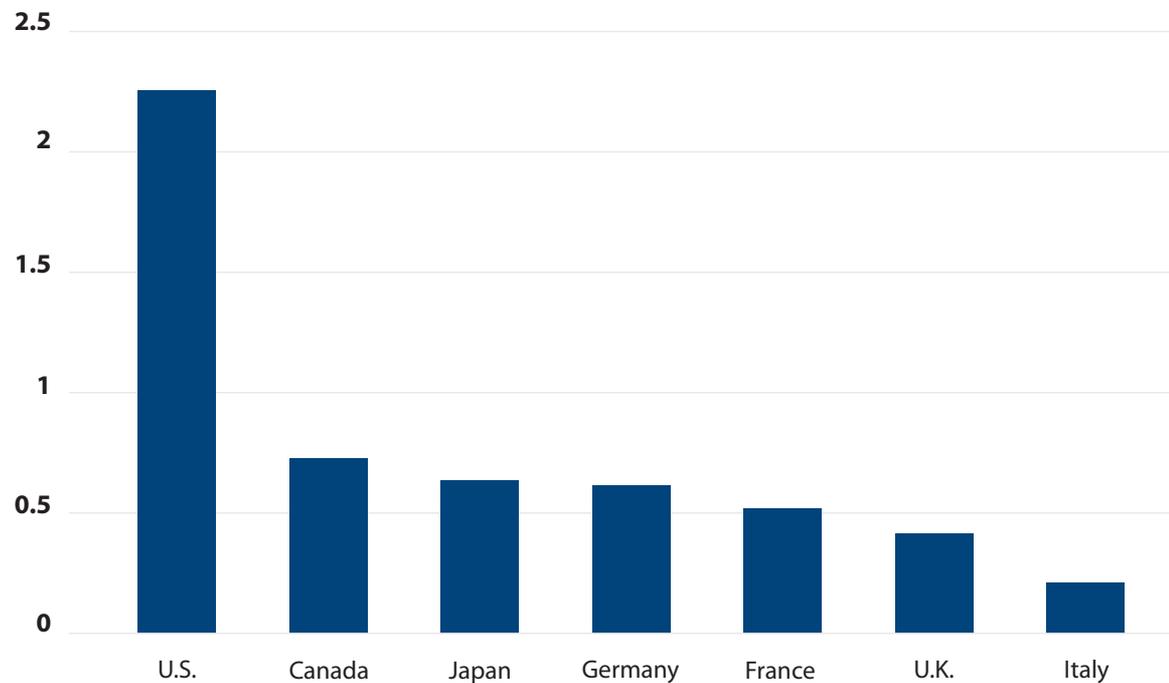
Chart 3.1¹⁵

The top 5 states fund child welfare programs at almost 4 times the level of the bottom 5. Child welfare spending in Rhode Island is more than 12 times that in South Carolina.

State	Per Capita Child Welfare Expenditures
Rhode Island	\$181.34
Pennsylvania	\$137.89
Alaska	\$129.02
Vermont	\$126.31
California	\$121.16
Arkansas	\$35.99
Nevada	\$34.02
Maine	\$31.88
Mississippi	\$28.82
South Carolina	\$14.72

Child Maltreatment Deaths

per 100,000 Children • Chart 3.2¹⁶



Child abuse deaths in the U.S. are much higher than in the other rich democracies as seen in [Chart 3.2](#).

The U.S. child abuse death rate is 3 times as high as Canada's and 11 times as high as Italy's.

Much is known about how to treat child abuse. But unless new investments are made to prevent child abuse in the first place, the sad story of child maltreatment will continue to repeat itself from one generation of troubled families to the next.

PRISONS

A REFLECTION OF FAILED SOCIAL POLICY

The United States has less than 5% of the world's population and 24% of the world's prisoners, yet it continues to have much higher crime rates than the other rich democracies.¹⁷

The U.S. prison population increased nearly 700% between 1980 and 2005, rising from 320,000 to almost 2.2 million in a single generation.¹⁸ Imprisonment has become a costly and ineffectual substitute for addressing substance abuse, poverty, mental illness, and educational failure. It also jeopardizes the life chances of millions of children who have a parent in prison.

Despite its much greater reliance on incarceration, as seen in Chart 4.1, the U.S. homicide rate is three times the United Kingdom's and eight times Japan's.

Incarceration and Homicide in Rich Democracies • [Chart 4.1](#)

Prison Population per 100,000 People ¹⁹	Nation	Homicides per 100,000 People ²⁰
756	United States	4.28
153	United Kingdom	1.41
116	Canada	1.49
96	France	1.73
92	Italy	1.28
89	Germany	1.16
63	Japan	0.50

The U.S. prison population is overwhelmingly poor, uneducated, and disproportionately minority.



There is a high correlation between problems in childhood and incarceration.²¹ Childhood trauma does not excuse a future criminal act. But it can explain how bad behavior is manufactured. It can begin in utero when a fetus is exposed to a mother’s substance abuse, or when a toddler is victimized by a father’s unrestrained violence.

Violent offenders belong in prison. But instead of funding smart policies proven to deter crime in the first place, as in other democracies, U.S. policy favors locking up ever more offenders, including the 1.2 million non-violent offenders on whom nearly \$24 billion was spent in 2000.²²

Present prison policies weigh most heavily on African-Americans:

- Black males are 44% of all inmates with sentences of more than a year — but they are only 6.5% of the U.S. population.²³
- The incarceration rate for American black men is four times higher than it was in South Africa during its apartheid era.²⁴

Imprisonment of women has skyrocketed, from 12,000 women in 1980 to 104,000 in 2004 — an increase of almost 900%.²⁵ Most women prisoners are poor. Their crimes often include credit card abuse or check forgery.²⁶ About one-third are serving mandatory sentences for drug offenses.²⁷

As seen in [Chart 4.2](#), the states which show the best outcomes for children also, predictably, show the lowest rates of adult incarceration.

Taking Care of Children Leads to Less Imprisonment

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 4.2

State	Imprisonment Rank	Overall Child Well-being Rank ²⁸	Incarceration per 1000 Adults ²⁹
Maine	1	10	2.14
Massachusetts	2	2	2.28
Minnesota	3	8	2.40
North Dakota	4	14	2.85
New Hampshire	5	5	2.89
Texas	46	46	9.94
Alaska	47	31	10.31
Mississippi	48	49	10.43
Delaware	49	30	11.04
Louisiana	50	50	11.68

Adults in the bottom 5 states are almost 4.5 times as likely to be incarcerated as adults in the top 5. Louisiana’s incarceration rate is 5.5 times Maine’s.

READINESS FOR SUCCESS

PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

Too many children, both middle and low-income, enter kindergarten without the skills needed to succeed. Only half of eligible three- and four-year-olds are served by Head Start, the government's early childhood development program. Early Head Start, for infants and toddlers under three, serves only 1 in 20 of those eligible. Millions more children are not enrolled in any pre-k program or are enrolled in ones that do not meet standards for quality.

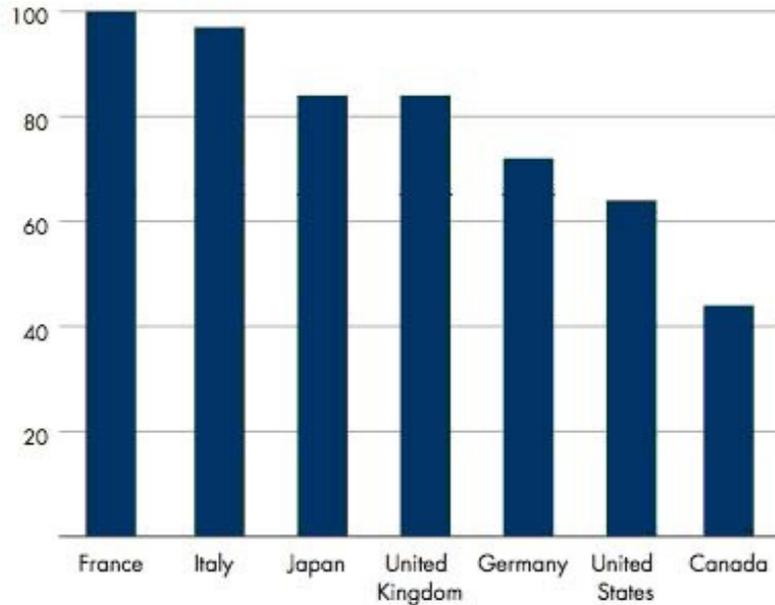
Research tells us that young children are eager learners and that what and how much they learn before school matters a great deal. Children who begin kindergarten familiar with letters, numbers, and shapes are much more likely to grasp the foundational math and reading concepts needed to become successful learners. Children denied exposure to these basic skills begin school far behind their peers – and are likely to remain behind.

Not only do children benefit from high-quality pre-kindergarten education, we all do. Quality programs improve the education, employment, and earnings of students. They also reduce crime. The U.S. could see a \$2 to \$4 return on every dollar invested if preschool programs were extended to all children.³⁰ Preschool investments for just one age group of students could generate as much as \$150 billion in benefits to the U.S. over a lifetime. These investments improve the economies of states and the nation by reducing education and criminal justice costs while boosting income-tax revenues. Early learning creates smarter kids and a stronger economy – a smart investment that benefits all Americans.³¹



Percentage of Children Ages Three to Five in Center-Based Preprimary and Primary Education in G7 Countries

Chart 5.1



The United States falls far behind most other rich democracies in the percentage of three- to five-year-olds participating in center-based pre-k and primary education programs.

Percentage of Three- and Four-Year-Olds Enrolled in State Pre-K, Preschool Special Education, or Federal Head Start ³²

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 5.2

State	Rank	Rate
Oklahoma	1	52.9%
West Virginia	2	50.0%
Vermont	3	47.1%
Kentucky	4	44.9%
Arkansas	5	40.0%
Idaho	46	12.3%
Hawaii	47	12.2%
New Hampshire	48	10.4%
Utah	49	10.2%
Nevada	50	9.7%

Chart 5.2 shows that more than four times as many three- and four-year-old children participate in a state pre-kindergarten, preschool special education, or federal Head Start program in the top five states than in the bottom five states. More than 5 times as many three- and four-year-olds participate in one of these programs in Oklahoma as participate in Nevada.

AFTERSCHOOL IN AMERICA

BEYOND THE SCHOOL BELL

As many as 14 million children are on their own after school. Among them are an estimated 40,000 kindergarteners.³³ On school days, the hours from 3-6 pm are peak hours for kids to smoke, drink and experiment with drugs; to become crime victims; to be in car accidents; or to commit crimes.³⁴ The millions of children and teens who begin self-care at young ages are at increased risk of poor educational and behavioral outcomes.

Quality afterschool programs can cut crime immediately and transform the prime hours for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun, and community service.

Despite these positive outcomes, existing after-school programs meet only half the demand of elementary and middle school parents. Only one in ten K-12 grade children and youth participate in after-school programs.³⁵ As many as 15 million would participate if a quality program was available in their community. But millions of families are unable to pay for afterschool programs and require a subsidy.



Through the Child Care Development Fund³⁶ and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program,³⁷ the federal government provides a modest \$100 or so per year in afterschool program funding for each child in the country. As can be seen in Chart 6.1, the per-child amount the federal government provides for afterschool programs varies sharply by state.

Per Child Federal Contribution to After-school Programs

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 6.1

State	Amount	Rank
Vermont	\$178.48	1
Rhode Island	\$178.10	2
Alaska	\$176.13	3
Kentucky	\$175.32	4
New York	\$174.26	5
Maryland	\$71.28	46
New Hampshire	\$70.85	47
Utah	\$67.35	48
Colorado	\$60.72	49
Nevada	\$59.45	50

Chart 6.1 shows that U.S. children in the bottom five states receive one-third the federal subsidy for afterschool than children in the top five states. A Nevada child receives only one-third the subsidy of a Vermont child.



CHILD POVERTY

IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE SO HIGH

In Washington, DC, the world's most powerful capital, wretched poverty – and the drug use, violence and depression such poverty fosters – begins a few blocks from the U.S. Congress. The capital's 29.2% child poverty rate is higher than all but one state's³⁸ – and much higher than that of the other rich democracies.

Worse, recent data show not only that millions more children are entering poverty but that many are entering deep poverty, where household income is less than 50% of the poverty level. If the poverty rate for a family of two is 14,000, then a child in deep poverty is in a household where the income is 7,000 or less.³⁹

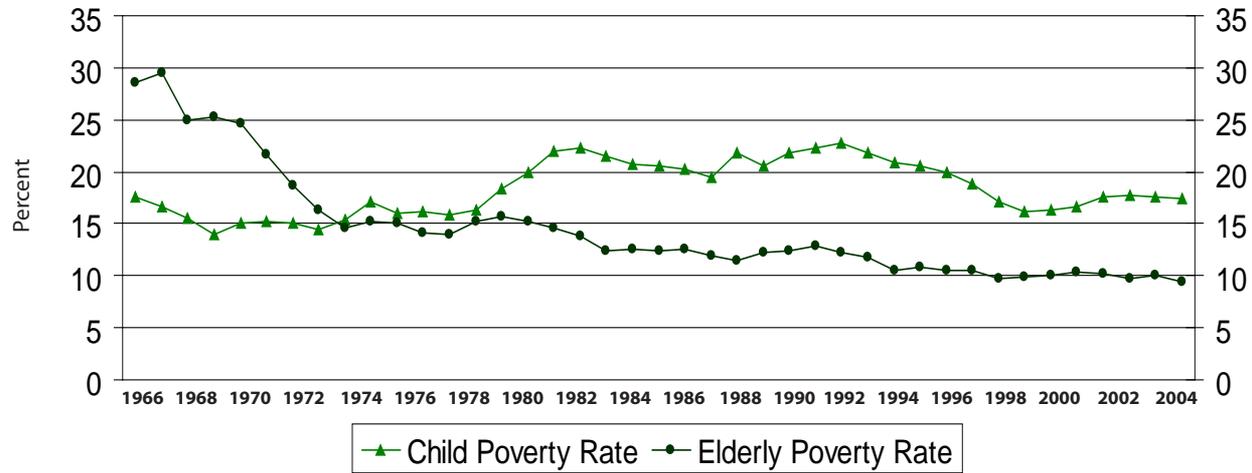
It has been decades since Congress had a serious debate about poverty. The welfare reform legislation of the 1990's was not about reducing child poverty; it was about reducing the number of families on the welfare rolls, which it did — from 4.4 million families in 1996 to 1.8 million today.⁴⁰ But there are still millions of children in working families living below the poverty level, with the number sure to grow during the current recession.

The U.S. has the worst child poverty rate among 24 rich countries.⁴¹ These countries have policies which reduce child poverty much more sharply than those in the United States. The U.S. does know how to reduce poverty among large groups: over the last 45 years, U.S. policies produced spectacular drops in elderly poverty rates; now the elderly are the least poor. During the same period, child poverty remained constant despite huge gains in America's wealth (Chart 7.1). Federal spending in 2007 was nearly 7 times greater for persons over age 65 than under age 18 — \$27,289 per person versus \$4,000 per person, respectively.⁴²



Elderly and Child Poverty Rates

Chart 7.1⁴³



Poverty is Not a Character Builder

“Poverty is associated with negative outcomes for children. It can impede children’s cognitive development and their ability to learn. It can contribute to behavioral, social and emotional problems. [it]...can lead to poor health... [the risks]...are

greatest among children who experience poverty when they are young and among children who experience persistent and deep poverty...”⁴⁴

Chart 7.2 demonstrates the United States' weak anti-poverty performance on behalf of children. And as with other indicators, the differences in child poverty rates among the states are dramatic, as seen in Chart 7.3. In other rich countries, national policies sharply narrow these regional differences.

The Effectiveness of Government Intervention on Child Poverty

Chart 7.2⁴⁵

Country	Child Poverty Rate Before Government Intervention	Child Poverty Rate After Government Intervention	Percent Change in Poverty
France	28%	7.5%	-73%
Germany	18%	10%	-44%
UK	25%	15%	-39%
Canada	23%	15%	-35%
U.S.	27%	22%	-18%

This chart shows the powerful effect of government policies in reducing child poverty rates — except in the U.S., where federal anti-poverty measures aimed at children are weak.

Child Poverty

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 7.3⁴⁶

State	Rank	Child Poverty Rate
New Hampshire	1	6.5%
Alaska	2	8.5%
New Jersey	3	10.7%
Vermont	4	10.9%
Hawaii	5	11.6%
Maryland	5	11.6%
Washington	5	11.6%
Alabama	46	22.5%
Louisiana	47	22.7%
West Virginia	48	24.0%
Texas	49	25.0%
Mississippi	50	32.8%

A child in the bottom states is almost two-and-a-half times as likely to be living in poverty as a child in the top. A child in Mississippi is more than five times as likely to live in poverty as a child in New Hampshire.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The American economy cannot function efficiently without quality child care. For millions of families such care is either unavailable or unaffordable. As a consequence, millions of children are in sub-standard care and not receiving the full benefit of an early learning opportunity.

Quality child care is in everyone's best interest. In one survey, 62 percent of employers offering quality child care say their employees have higher morale and 52 percent report increased productivity.⁴⁷

Child care costs are high compared to other household expenses, ranging from about \$3,800 to \$11,000 for a 4-year-old. Infant care is substantially higher. Child care costs are typically higher than what households spend on food, and care for two children exceeds average rent costs. In 43 states, attendance at a public university for a year is less than the cost of placing an infant in child care.⁴⁸

Child care is not a luxury for children, parents, and employers. Children in quality programs receive educational and social benefits that endure for life, and they are in safe environments while parents work.



Affordability of Child Care for Single Parents

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 8.1⁴⁹

State	Median Single Parent Income	Pre-School Care	
		Average Annual Cost	Percent of Income
Utah	\$25,379	\$5,112	20%
Kansas	\$21,970	\$4,446	20%
Delaware	\$27,993	\$6,230	22%
Nevada	\$26,170	\$6,045	23%
Kentucky	\$16,763	\$3,960	24%
Washington	\$23,731	\$8,364	35%
Rhode Island	\$19,964	\$7,800	39%
New York	\$23,487	\$9,391	40%
Massachusetts	\$25,538	\$10,668	42%
Oregon	\$19,569	\$9,012	46%

Child care affordability varies significantly by state. In the five least affordable states, single parents pay 40% of their income for child care, twice what they pay in the five most affordable states.⁴⁸

Parent Share of Child Care Costs, by Country

Chart 8.2⁵⁰

Country	Approximate Parent Share of Child Care Costs
United States	60%
Australia	31%
France	27% for children 0-3; free for children 3-6
Norway	20%
Italy	18% for children 0-3; free for children 3-6
Finland	15%
Germany	14%
Sweden	9%

American families get little or no support in paying for child care compared to families in other rich democracies. Overall, the federal government underwrites 25% of costs, state and local governments 15%, and parents the remaining 60%. As Chart 8.2 shows, other countries cover a much larger share, and many children attend programs for free.⁴⁹

IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE THIS WAY.

NEW INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MUST BE A NATIONAL PRIORITY

Whatever their political persuasion, the vast majority of Americans want more investments in their children and grandchildren. Not only because they desire to improve each child's chances for success, but also because they know the nation's global competitiveness depends on it and an aging population requires it.

Americans believe that their government has a moral responsibility to help provide for the health, education, and safety of all children. With a new Administration and Congress grappling with the proper role of government in managing the economy, and assisting major corporations because of the difficulties they've encountered, a national debate on the best ways government can help families and children overcome homeland insecurity also is in order.

Every citizen can help spark debate by asking lawmakers to present their plans for addressing the needs of children and families.





10-YEAR, \$500 BILLION INVEST-IN-KIDS AGENDA

Millions of children lack access to health care, early care and education, afterschool programs, and child-abuse and neglect prevention services.

This child-investment gap costs the U.S. billions of dollars each year in lost productivity, remedial education, and crime. It also means that millions of children don't have the opportunity to make the most of their lives.

That's why the Every Child Matters Education Fund proposes a 10-Year, \$500 Billion Invest-In-Kids Agenda that would include the following components:

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Challenge

There are three million reports of child abuse and neglect a year. Thousands of children are killed and severely injured. Abuse and neglect take a long-term physical and emotional toll on individual children, their families, and the communities in which they live.

The Investment

Fully fund proven prevention and treatment programs which can sharply reduce abuse and neglect while strengthening families.

The Benefits

Millions of children saved from violence and neglect, which reduces their chances of experiencing poverty, being imprisoned or unemployed, and failing to attain educational success.

CHILD HEALTH

The Challenge

Nine million children are without health insurance. Millions are not receiving timely or comprehensive medical attention, allowing preventable illness to strike.

The Investment

Provide affordable health coverage to every child and young person up to the age of 21.

The Benefits

Healthier children and lower long-term health care costs.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Challenge

Millions of children and youth experience emotional problems serious enough to impede learning and development.

The Investment

Provide a full array of prevention and treatment services, including training for those who work with children, to allow parents and providers of care to recognize the warning signs and intervene early.

The Benefits

Emotionally healthy children, youth and young adults.



INVEST-IN-KIDS AGENDA CONTINUED

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

The Challenge

Millions of infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers lack access to affordable, high-quality early care and education opportunities.

The Investment

Provide all children ages zero to five with affordable, high-quality early care and education opportunities by fully funding Head Start, Early Head Start, federal child-care assistance for working families, and sufficient federal and state funding so that all three- and four-year-olds can enroll in a quality pre-k program.

The Benefits

Safe, nurturing and stimulating conditions for children ages zero to five that promote school readiness, future academic performance, and other positive social outcomes.

INVEST-IN-KIDS AGENDA CONTINUED

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Challenge

Millions of children and youth who are in unsupervised situations at the end of each school day would benefit from participation in quality after-school programs.

The Investment

Provide all children with access to quality, enriching activities in a safe and supportive environment.

The Benefits

Children who learn more and who are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or use drugs or participate in other risky activities.

POVERTY AND WORKING FAMILIES

The Challenge

More than 13 million children and youth live below the poverty line. Millions more are in low-wage families with parents who work full-time but simply cannot earn enough to provide for basic family needs.

The Investment

Provide a combination of tax credits and deductions, minimum wage increases, family allowances, subsidized health insurance, and child-care in order to guarantee that the household income of full-time, low-wage workers does not fall below the federal poverty level.

The Benefits

Improved school performance, lower child abuse rates, less crime and domestic violence, safer housing, healthier lifestyles, less substance abuse, lower prison rates, and numerous other improvements.

WE CAN DO THIS.
OUR CHILDREN ARE WAITING.

THE BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Parents and grandparents know that investing in children is the right thing to do. Scientific research verifies what we know intuitively about creating opportunities for children: America gains vast benefits from improved educational performance, better trained workers, reduced crime and drug dependency, and more stable families. A few examples follow.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

Quality pre-k and early learning benefit children and the U.S. economy. They bring back seven dollars for every dollar invested.⁵¹ Universal preschool would boost long-term economic growth: gross domestic product by 2080 could be higher by 3.5 percent or more than \$2 trillion in today's dollars according to one study.⁵²

EARLY HEAD START

Two-year-olds enrolled in Early Head Start perform better on child development tests, have larger vocabularies and are able to speak in more complex sentences than other impoverished children, according to one study. Early Head Start also appears to benefit the parents of poor children. They were more likely to read to their children and were less likely to resort to spanking.⁵³



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Nurse partnership programs allow nurses to conduct home visits with low-income, first-time mothers from pregnancy through the child's second birthday. The program focuses on behaviors to improve pregnancy outcomes, parenting skills to improve child health and development, and plans for the mother's life. Studies show economic benefits ranging from \$2 to \$6 for every dollar invested.⁵⁴ They also show dramatic reductions in child abuse and neglect.⁵⁵

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Improved health outcomes begin with coverage for every child. A study in Montana shows that the state would receive a positive economic payback of more than \$2.50 for every state dollar spent on insuring every child. Other returns include better school performance, with more than 20% gains in attention and concentration in the classroom compared to the child's performance before insurance.⁵⁶

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school programs are cost-effective. After-school programs keep youth busy during the hours they are most likely to get into trouble. They provide access to caring adults who provide the support they need to succeed, whether it's homework help or learning how to say no to drugs. Children and youth who attend quality after-school programs have better grades and conduct in school, are more likely to graduate, and experience less drug-use, violence and pregnancy.⁵⁷ Every dollar invested saves taxpayers approximately \$3.⁵⁸





ASK ELECTED OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

1. Over 8 million children have no health insurance in the U.S.
Q. How do you propose to ensure that children grow up healthy and have access to comprehensive health care?
2. 3.5 million children nationwide are reported abused and neglected.
Q. What are your plans to keep all children safe from violence in their homes, schools, and communities?
3. Millions of children are left alone every day after school.
Q. What is your position on how to keep children safe and supervised in the late afternoon and early evening hours?
4. Millions of children lack access to early learning opportunities.
Q. What is your position on early learning and care, including preparing children for kindergarten?
5. Almost 13 million of America's children live in poverty.
Q. What would you do to help families with children become economically self-sufficient and able to provide for their family's needs?
6. Millions of children have a parent in prison.
Q. How would you address the special needs of these children?

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP US HELP KIDS!

- Make sure you are registered to vote – and then vote in all federal, state, and local elections!
- Ask elected officials where they stand on children's issues, and let them know that if they want your vote, they need to support children, youth, and families. Visit our website for contact information: www.everychildmatters.org.
- Contact your federal, state, and local policymakers and urge them to adopt a comprehensive Invest-In-Kids plan so that every child really does matter.
- Volunteer at events that raise the visibility of children's issues, including the ECM-sponsored "Step Up for Kids Day" in your state.
- Write a letter to a newspaper and other media to communicate with a larger audience in your community about the importance of investing in kids.
- Sign up for our regular e-mail updates to get the latest on children and politics.
- Make an on-line donation to help us make children a national priority.

The Every Child Matters Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization working to make children, youth, and families a national political priority.

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