June 11, 2019

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC. 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC. 20510

Dear Senator Harris and Senator Menendez:

As members of the Children’s Budget Coalition, we are writing to express our support for the Focus on Children Act (FOCA) and the Children’s Budget Act (CBA). The Children’s Budget Coalition is comprised of over 80 children and family advocacy organizations who are dedicated to ensuring that our nation’s leaders prioritize children in federal budget decisions. These complementary bills would authorize a clear and full accounting of all the money the federal government spends on and for children helping policymakers and the public better understand and accurately evaluate how children are faring in critical, federal budget decisions.

Currently, there exists no simple, widely agreed upon and comprehensive method or oversight process that regularly tracks the federal spending on children’s programs and services. These objectives are difficult to achieve given the wide array of issues specific or unique to children that span so many policy areas, covering dozens of agencies and bureaus. A formal tracking process would allow for an accurate assessment of the overall level of investment in children and the spending trends affecting them. Therefore, we applaud your leadership in introducing the FOCA and CBA to authorize both the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to regularly conduct a deliberate and complete accounting of federal spending on children’s programs and services.

Our budget reflects our values and far too often, children remain an afterthought in federal budget decisions. If we truly value our children, that must change, and one important and helpful step would be to install greater transparency in those spending decisions. The FOCA would direct the CBO to submit annual, separate studies and reports to Congress that would provide detailed analysis of the diverse funding streams for children’s programs across the federal government. The FOCA also would ensure that the data and spending trends identified by CBO would be available to the public and communicate a clear and comprehensive picture of the share of federal dollars benefitting America’s young people. The CBA would require the OMB to take similar action to provide a comprehensive, separate accounting of the President’s budget decisions affecting children including a summary of new obligational authority and outlays requested for children’s programs and a detailed breakdown of spending on children and children’s programs by agency and initiative. These complementary bills are one easy, efficient approach to help policymakers evaluate where children truly stand in our national priorities.

We thank you for your introduction of the FOCA and the CBA to spotlight the importance of prioritizing federal investments in our children. We look forward to working with you to seek prompt consideration and passage of these important legislative initiatives.

Sincerely,
First Focus Campaign for Children
Campaign for Youth Justice