

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 9, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris:

As Members of Congress dedicated to ending child poverty in the United States, we write to ask you to establish a national child poverty reduction target through executive action and solidify your commitment made in the American Families Plan to address our nation's high rate of child poverty. We must examine how our policies affect child poverty in real-time so that we can ensure meaningful progress and protect our youngest children as we recover from the pandemic.

It is not an overstatement to say that our children are facing some of the most challenging times seen in our nation's history. Our country's historically high rate of child poverty and significant racial poverty gap are among the most pressing of these challenges and are the root causes of so many of the obstacles to success faced by too many of our nation's children. Historically, the United States has experienced higher levels of child poverty than other wealthy nations because we have failed to properly invest in our nation's children and families. Children are the poorest individuals in our society, especially young children who are undergoing critical stages of brain development.

The injustice of high child poverty rates in our country is magnified by the racial disparities in who experiences poverty by the tremendous suffering poverty exacts. Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children all experience significantly higher levels of poverty than their white peers due to the racism ingrained in so many of our country's systems and institutions. Children in immigrant families still face more significant barriers to economic stability than non-immigrant families due to their restricted access to tax credits and other benefits. Further, children living in Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories are not accounted for in much government poverty data, but we know that they face higher rates of poverty than children in the 50 states and D.C. due to unequal access to federal benefits.

The good news is that we have identified a number of key policies that successfully reduce child poverty and the racial poverty gap. As the recent U.S. Census Bureau report indicates, government programs dramatically reduced child poverty and racial disparities in 2021, yielding the lowest Supplemental Poverty Measure rate since publication of the measure and the third consecutive annual decline. Specifically, the Child Tax Credit alone lifted 1 million children under age 6 and 1.9 million children aged 6 to 17 out of poverty. The stimulus payments and enhanced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program coupled with school lunch lifted 2.3 million and 1.2 million children out of poverty, respectively. Together, these federal programs significantly reduced household food insecurity and material hardship. Although the overall child poverty rate decreased by nearly 50 percent, the reduction was largest for white children (51.4 percent) and Black children (51.4 percent), with Hispanic children experiencing a 42.8 percent

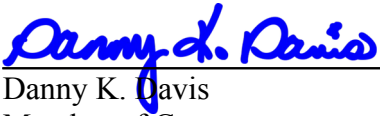
reduction in child poverty. Unfortunately, the research also demonstrates that the expiration of these programs increased financial difficulties and food hardship. Additionally, [estimates suggest](#) monthly child poverty has increased dramatically since the expiration of these programs, underscoring the need for a renewed effort to reduce child poverty.

We ask you to solidify the Administration’s commitment to addressing child poverty in the United States by establishing a national child poverty reduction target through executive action. Establishing a target is necessary to create accountability and focus across the federal government to identify opportunities to alleviate child poverty and maintain the progress made in 2021. We are grateful for your leadership in securing assistance in the *American Rescue Plan Act* that strengthened families and improved child well-being during a pandemic. While we continue to fight for permanent improvements to the Child Tax Credit and other critical assistance, we also know more federal action is needed to ensure robust and long-term progress to ultimately end child poverty in the United States and close the racial poverty gap.

As leaders of the Executive Branch, you are in a unique position to focus attention on child poverty that a poverty target would advance. The effectiveness of child poverty reduction targets is well-established. After setting targets and implementing strategies to address child poverty, the United Kingdom cut its child poverty rate [in half between 1999 and 2008](#) and before the outbreak of COVID-19, [Canada had reduced child poverty by over a third in just three years](#). There is also growing momentum here in the United States, with child poverty reduction targets in place in [California](#), [New York](#) and [Puerto Rico](#). We should not wait until this emergency has passed to gauge our success retrospectively. We need on-going, evidence-based examinations of child poverty to inform and adjust our policies during the pandemic. If our policies fail to diminish child poverty, we will need to do more. If our policies succeed in lowering child poverty, then we will need to continue our path to strengthen and expand these programs. **Without continuous monitoring of child poverty by the federal government during this crisis and recovery, we risk irreparable harm to our youngest children, especially children of color.**

We urge you to establish a national child poverty reduction target that builds continuous monitoring of child poverty reduction into our government operations to maintain our recent gains in reducing child poverty and racial disparities. Child poverty deeply hurts our children and robs them – and our nation – of a bright future. It steals vast opportunities and healthy development well into adulthood and creates racial inequities for generations. Executive action creating a child poverty target will promote federal accountability to ensure that each and every child in the U.S. has the resources they need to be healthy, happy, safe, and successful.

Sincerely,



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



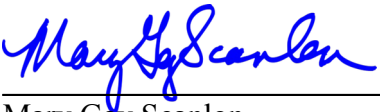
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



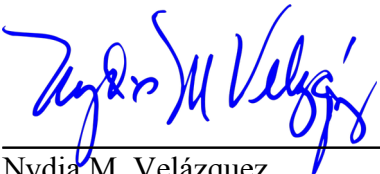
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



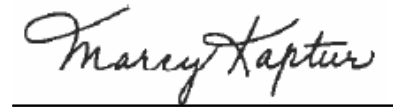
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



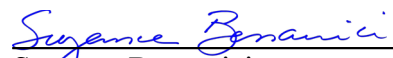
Nydia M. Velázquez
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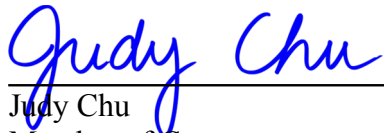
Marcy Kaptur
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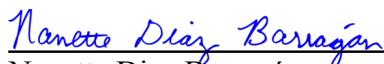
Nikema Williams
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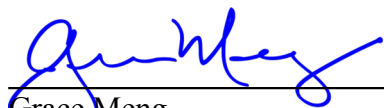
André Carson
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