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COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2101 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

December 4, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chair Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Ranking Member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and Ranking Member of the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee, we write to underscore the need for funding to help meet the needs of young children and families across the country. This includes funding affordable child care as proposed in President Biden's domestic emergency package; reinstating the expanded Child Tax Credit that the Census Bureau found lifted 2.1 million children out of poverty¹; and fully funding the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Investing in Child Care

Any upcoming funding package should include support for child care. The COVID-19 pandemic was a clear reminder that affordable child care is essential to children, parents, and our economy. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the importance of supporting access to child care has become even more important, as the sector has struggled to make up lost ground in terms of enrollment

¹ Kaylee Burns and Liana E. Fox, *The Impact of the 2021 Expanded Child Tax Credit on Child Poverty*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2022), <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2022/demo/SEHSD-wp2022-24.html>.

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and supply in the wake of the crisis.² Thankfully, Congress provided \$24 billion in funding in the *American Rescue Plan Act* for Child Care Stabilization Grants, which reached over 220,000 child care providers and as many as 10 million children, representing a successful strategy for sustaining and strengthening the supply of child care.³ This funding was used to help with pandemic recovery but expired in September 2023. Advocates predicted concerning outcomes for children and families after the expiration of the Child Care Stabilization Grants.⁴ Recent data shows concerning trends. A survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and RAPID, a survey project based at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood, found that:

29% of families reported that their child care tuition had increased in the last month, 28% of child care providers who have run out of stabilization funding indicated they had cut wages or were unable to sustain salary increases, [and] 34% of providers who have run out of stabilization funding reported they were serving fewer children.⁵

For this reason, it is imperative that any package include funding for child care to ensure young children have access to quality learning opportunities, provide child care workers the support they deserve, give parents the freedom to pursue rewarding careers, and contribute to our economic growth. President Biden has highlighted the need for additional funds to “help keep child care providers afloat, mitigating the likelihood that providers will close or raise costs for families.”⁶

Fighting Child Poverty

Second, it is imperative that any appropriations package includes a restoration of the expanded Child Tax Credit. In 2020 and 2021, pandemic era programs avoided a historic surge in poverty

² See YING-CHUN LIN & MEGHAN MCDONIEL, UNDERSTANDING CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM CLOSURES AND ENROLLMENT DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (Admin. for Child. and Fams., Off. of Plan., Rsch., and Evaluation, 2023), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/understanding-child-care-and-early-education-program-closures-and-enrollment-during>; see also *Child Care Sector Jobs: BLS Analysis*, CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF CHILD CARE EMP. (Nov. 7, 2023), <https://csce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/child-care-sector-jobs-bls-analysis/>.

³ The White House, FACT SHEET: White House Calls on Congress to Support Critical Domestic Needs (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/25/fact-sheet-white-house-calls-on-congress-to-support-critical-domestic-needs/>.

⁴ Julie Kashen et al., CHILD CARE CLIFF: 3.2 MILLION CHILDREN LIKELY TO LOSE SPOTS WITH END OF FEDERAL FUNDS, The Century Foundation (2023), <https://tcf.org/content/report/child-care-cliff/#>.

⁵ National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Going Over the Child Care Cliff: New data from the RAPID survey show that predictions made by providers are coming true* (Nov. 2023), https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/nov_survey_brief.pdf.

⁶ The White House, FACT SHEET: White House Calls on Congress to Support Critical Domestic Needs (Oct. 25, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/25/fact-sheet-white-house-calls-on-congress-to-support-critical-domestic-needs/>.

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by keeping roughly 53 million people out of poverty.⁷ The impact on children was striking. In 2021, child poverty fell by a record 4.4 percentage points, bringing child poverty to a record low of 5.2 percent.⁸ The Child Tax Credit expansion alone was estimated to have kept 2.1 million children out of poverty in 2021.⁹ The expansion of the Child Tax Credit in the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* increased the value of the credit and crucially ensured that the full value of the credit was available to all lower- and middle-income families.¹⁰ Expanding the Child Tax Credit in 2024 would help nearly 60 million children.¹¹ Such assistance is especially critical to help families at this time, when child care remains unaffordable for too many parents. Incidentally, a group of conservative leaders has also urged Congress to strengthen the Child Tax Credit.¹²

Bolstering Nutrition Supports for Women, Infants, and Children

Finally, for more than 25 years, there has been a consistent and bipartisan commitment to provide sufficient WIC funding to serve all eligible applicants. Yet, the 2024 House Agriculture Appropriations bill¹³ drastically underfunded benefits for low-income pregnant and postpartum women and children and undermined science-based WIC food benefits. Even more concerning, earlier this year, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) outlined the need for an additional \$1.4 billion in FY 2024 funding for WIC¹⁴ due to a significant increase in participation this fiscal year, with a total of 6.7 million women, children, and infants being served by the program (as of June).¹⁵ OMB has warned that without additional funding, participants could see disruptions in benefits.¹⁶ As a result, any upcoming appropriations

⁷ Danilo Trisi, *Government's Pandemic Response Turned a Would-Be Poverty Surge Into a Record Poverty Decline*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Aug. 29, 2023), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/governments-pandemic-response-turned-a-would-be-poverty-surge-into>.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Table B-2. Number and Percentage of People in Poverty Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2009 to 2022*, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2023/demo/p60-280.html> (last visited Nov. 29, 2023).

⁹ Burns and Fox, *supra* note 1.

¹⁰ Joe Hughes and Emma Sifre, *Expanding the Child Tax Credit Would Advance Racial Equity in the Tax Code*, INST. ON TAX'N AND ECON. POL'Y (Aug. 29, 2023), <https://itep.org/expanding-the-child-tax-credit-would-advance-racial-equity-in-the-tax-code/>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Letter from Newt Gingrich, Former Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, et al., to Mike Johnson, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, et al. (Nov. 14, 2023), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/f/?id=0000018b-cf93-d7d5-a1db-ffb31a020000>.

¹³ U.S. Dep't of Agric., *WIC Data Tables*, Food and Nutrition Serv. (Sept. 8, 2023), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>.

¹⁴ Tony Romm, *White House asks Congress to pass short-term spending deal, boost food aid*, THE WASH. POST (Aug. 31, 2023, 9:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/08/31/white-house-congressional-spending-government-shutdown/>.

¹⁵ U.S. Dep't of Agric., *supra* note 13.

¹⁶ Juliana Kaplan & Ayelet Sheffey, *Biden's asking Congress for a budget Band-Aid. It'll make student loan repayment easier, secure Social Security and food benefits – and avoid a government shutdown*, BUSINESS INSIDER (Aug. 31, 2023), <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-funding-social-security-student-loan-repayment-wic-food-benefits-2023-8>.

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package that fails to provide the necessary funding would jeopardize the program, potentially forcing up to 600,000 eligible new parents and children (predominantly preschoolers, toddlers, and postpartum adults) onto waiting lists and denying them vital nutrition benefits and WIC services that are critical for healthy development.¹⁷ Many of the parents and children who would be turned away from the program come from families of color that are already at an increased risk of maternal and infant mortality compared to white families.¹⁸ Additionally, Black, Native American, and Pacific Islander infants are twice as likely to experience more preterm births, low birth weights, and births for which no timely prenatal care was provided than white infants.¹⁹

In sum, inadequate funding puts at risk a program that has consistently proven vital to new parents and young children by promoting healthy growth and development, increasing intake of vitamins and nutrient-dense foods, and lowering health care costs, especially in low-income communities and communities of color.²⁰ We urge you to ensure that WIC funding is adequate to meet the need, as advised in President Biden's FY 2024 domestic emergency proposal.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent request to support our nation's children and families.

¹⁷ Zoe Neuberger, *Young Children and New Parents in Every State Could Be Turned Away From WIC or Have Their Benefits Cut Under Pending Appropriations Bills*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Sept. 12, 2023, 9:00 AM), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/young-children-and-new-parents-in-every-state-could-be-turned-away-from-wic-or-have-their>.

¹⁸ Lauren Hall & Zoe Neuberger, *Eligible Low-Income Children Missing Out on Crucial WIC Benefits During Pandemic*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Oct. 5, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/eligible-low-income-children-missing-out-on-crucial-wic-benefits-during>; Katie Bergh & Lauren Hall, *Looming WIC Funding Shortfall Would Jeopardize Access to WIC's Proven Benefits and Disproportionately Harm Black and Hispanic Families*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Oct. 26, 2023, 5:00 AM), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/looming-wic-funding-shortfall-would-jeopardize-access-to-wics-proven-benefits-and>.

¹⁹ Lauren Hall & Zoe Neuberger, *Eligible Low-Income Children Missing Out on Crucial WIC Benefits During Pandemic*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Oct. 5, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/eligible-low-income-children-missing-out-on-crucial-wic-benefits-during>.

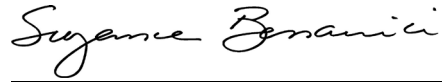
²⁰ wicstrong.com, *WIC Helps Your Community* (Feb. 9, 2023, 10:10 AM), <https://www.wicstrong.com/community/wic-helps-your-community/>.

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Sincerely,



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Education Subcommittee
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