

Friends of Children—Please sign on to the following letter, calling on candidates for federal office to commit to supporting increased investments in children. To sign on, please send your organization (or individual) name, city in NC and, if you're an organization, logo to mandy@ncchild.org. We'll put all the logos on the top, like the ones below.



Dear Candidate X,

On September 16th, North Carolina pediatricians, teachers, parents, direct service providers and child advocates will meet near the state Capitol steps in Raleigh at 9:30 am to call for you and other candidates for federal office to ***Step Up and Act for Children***. We ask you to commit to making children a higher federal priority by investing more federal funding in programs and services for children. Action for Children and its partners invite you to join us at this press event. We would be happy to recognize you.

The undersigned organizations and individuals from across North Carolina are also calling on you to make public your commitments to specific federal children's programs and legislation that directly impact North Carolina voters and their families.

Federal investments in children have fallen in real terms over the last few decades. By every metric—share of non-defense discretionary spending, share of overall domestic spending and percentage of the GDP—the share of federal budgetary spending on children is on a rapid downhill slide. Overall, federal domestic discretionary spending on children has declined by 23 percent since 1960. In just the last five years, spending on children's education has declined nearly 10 percent, child welfare spending has dropped 11.5 percent and youth training funding has fallen nearly 15 percent. If President Bush's fiscal year 2009 budget were enacted by Congress, funding on children's programs would fall below 10 percent for the first time in at least two generations. A budget is really just a

list of priorities, and Congress is making clear that our children are less of a priority every year.

North Carolina voters would like to see you commit that if elected you will work in Congress to:

- **Reauthorize SCHIP with sufficient funding and nullify the August 17th SCHIP directive** that is currently preventing the implementation of North Carolina's new NC Kids' Care program that would offer health insurance with sliding scale premiums to children living in families up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Over 120,000 children are covered by NC Health Choice, but another 264,000 have no health insurance at all. Given the steady loss in North Carolina of private dependent coverage (second in the nation), SCHIP is likely the top children's issue our state needs addressed at the federal level.
- **Reauthorize and strengthen the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)** which, for more than 30 years, has provided states with federal standards and supports for improving juvenile justice and delinquency prevention practices and put safeguards in place for youth, families and communities. Grounded in recent research in the juvenile justice field, the recommendations in the proposed Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2008 provide momentum for positive progress in the juvenile justice field and help protect the rights of youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
- **Overhaul and Fully Fund No Child Left Behind** so that North Carolina's schools can focus once again on actual student preparedness instead of the high-stakes testing that undermines effective classroom instruction and student performance. Since 2002, the federal government has transformed testing from a useful educational tool that assesses student performance into a punishment that threatens educators and students. This one-size fits-all program uses sanctions and punishments rather than resources and innovation and as a result teaching in North Carolina has become more difficult and less effective. As child advocates, we call on the federal government to leave testing and classroom instruction to the educators and to focus its legislative powers on providing a more equitable funding system for public education that truly can provide every student with a sound basic education.
- **Expand the federal Child Tax Credit** to more needy families by lowering the minimum income requirement and no longer indexing the earnings threshold to inflation. Lowering the threshold to \$8,500 would make over 72,000 North Carolina children newly eligible for the credit and would award over 300,000 children in the state a larger credit. The Child Tax Credit helps working families and those who most need help: nationally, some 70 percent of children who benefit have a parent working year-round 30 or more hours a week, and nearly 1-in-10 children who benefit live in families where either the child or a parent has a

disability. In addition, lowering the earnings threshold would bring an additional \$100 million in federal funds into our state.

- **Pass asset-building legislation, such as the ASPIRE Act and the Savings for Working Families Act** and encourage investment in financial literacy for children and adults, offering more low-income families the opportunity to own and grow assets. Asset-building and wealth creation are an essential but so far largely neglected aspect of addressing intergenerational poverty.

We would like to know what you think! Please direct your responses to:

Mandy Ableidinger
Action for Children North Carolina
1300 St. Mary's Street, Suite 500
Raleigh, NC 27605
919.834.6623 x233
mandy@ncchild.org

It is the fundamental duty of adults, especially our leaders, to adequately nurture, support and prepare the next generation, and today's investments will determine tomorrow's outcomes. A recent editorial in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said it well: "It's a mark of our compassion and decency that we care for the elderly, whether they are rich or poor. It's a mark of our foolishness that too often we fail to invest in children. Whatever their backgrounds, those kids' futures are our own."

Our support for you hinges on your support for children.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

Action for Children North Carolina
Raleigh

Advocacy for the Poor
Winston-Salem

Children First of Buncombe County
Asheville

Covenant with North Carolina's Children
Raleigh

Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative
Durham

Good Work
Raleigh

Legal Services of Southern Piedmont
Charlotte

National Alliance on Mental Illness-North Carolina
Raleigh

National Association of Social Workers-North Carolina
Raleigh

NC Families United, Inc.
Greensboro

North Carolina Association of Educators
Raleigh

NC Commission on Children with Special Health Care Needs
Statewide

Youth Homes, Inc.
Charlotte

Individuals:

Mellicent Blythe, LCSW
Chapel Hill

Joseph and Rebecca Burmester
Raleigh

Yvonne Perry
Wake County

David T. Tayloe, Jr., MD, FAAP
Goldsboro Pediatrics, PA
Goldsboro

Cyritha West
Franklin