

July 10, 2020

The Honorable James Risch  
Chairman  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bob Menendez  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez,

We write to thank you for your leadership on global health security. As your legislative efforts take shape, we hope you will support a child-focused response to pandemics as well. **Specifically, we urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold a Business Meeting soon to consider and report out S. 2715, the Global Child Thrive Act, to ensure that vulnerable young children are not left behind.** This bill is bipartisan and bicameral with strong support on both sides of the Capitol.

As civil society organizations prioritizing child development, we are keenly aware that secondary impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics will take the hardest toll on vulnerable children. Even before COVID-19, an estimated 250 million children in low and middle-income countries were growing up with stunted brains and bodies due to inadequate nutrition, lack of stimulation and exposure to stress. During the pandemic and in its wake, many children—particularly those under five years of age—will face severe disruptions to their healthy development. Hundreds of thousands of children have already lost a family member to COVID-19, some of whom provided their primary source of nurturing and safety. In addition, quarantines and school closures have contributed to isolation and child protection concerns. Further, with national lockdowns putting an economic strain on families across the globe, hunger and malnutrition will continue to rise. Humanitarian crises are now compounded, creating a ‘double emergency’ for refugees and children who are internally displaced. As always, children with disabilities are at the greatest risk of malnutrition, violence, and infectious disease.

If enacted, the Global Child Thrive Act would mandate that Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions be integrated, where practicable, into existing foreign aid programs serving young children and their families without authorizing additional funding. ECD activities are simple and cost-effective methods of building brain architecture by training caregivers to provide age-appropriate mental stimulation and nurturing care such as singing and reading. ECD activities serve as a catalyst, strengthening the impact of nutrition interventions and promoting bonds between children and their caregivers, providing them a “buffer” to outside shocks and stressors.

As organizations serving and supporting young children around the globe, we believe enacting the Global Child Thrive Act into law will make the most impactful and efficient use of our foreign aid dollars and multiply positive outcomes for vulnerable children. This will be achieved by maximizing the U.S. government’s ability to improve health, nutrition, education, child protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene outcomes. By contributing to child development at its most critical stage, the law will also help to boost local salaries and economies over the long-term, leading to more peaceful and prosperous communities and ultimately, self-reliance. **As you set priorities for your next Business Meeting, we urge you to ensure inclusion of S. 2715, the Global Child Thrive Act.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Very Sincerely,

1,000 Days  
Action Against Hunger  
Amal Alliance  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Public Health Association  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)  
Bann USA Hope Arise Initiative  
Basic Education Coalition  
Bethany Christian Services  
BRAC USA  
Bread for the World  
Care and Protection of Children (CPC) Learning Network, Columbia University  
Catholic Relief Services  
Chemonics International  
ChildFund International  
CORE Group  
Early Childhood Developmental Task Force  
Early Opportunities  
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation  
Feed the Children  
Food for the Hungry  
Global Campaign for Education-US  
Global Partners United LLC  
International Rescue Committee  
John Snow, Inc.  
LEGO Foundation  
Maestral International  
Medical IMPACT  
Partnership for Early Childhood Development & Disability Rights (PECDDR)  
PATH  
Plan International USA  
RESULTS  
RISE Institute  
RTI International  
Sesame Workshop  
Special Olympics International  
SPOON  
The Hunger Project  
The MHPSS Collaborative  
The Two Lilies Fund  
Theirworld  
UNICEF USA  
Whole Child International  
World Relief  
World Vision