

September 24, 2020

Chairman James Inhofe  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, room 228  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Attn: [John Bonsell](mailto:john_bonsell@armed-services.senate.gov), Staff Director  
[john\\_bonsell@armed-services.senate.gov](mailto:john_bonsell@armed-services.senate.gov)

Chairman Adam Smith  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
[Zach Steacy](mailto:zachary.steacy@mail.house.gov), Legislative Operations Director  
[zachary.steacy@mail.house.gov](mailto:zachary.steacy@mail.house.gov)

Ranking Member Jack Reed  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Attn: [Elizabeth King](mailto:elizabeth_king@armed-services.senate.gov), Staff Director  
[elizabeth\\_king@armed-services.senate.gov](mailto:elizabeth_king@armed-services.senate.gov)

Ranking Member Mac Thornberry  
House Armed Services Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
[Daniel Sennott](mailto:daniel.sennott@mail.house.gov), Staff Director, Republican  
[daniel.sennott@mail.house.gov](mailto:daniel.sennott@mail.house.gov)

**Subject: Support Inclusion of the Global Child Thrive Act in the National Defense Authorization Act**

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Smith and Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry,

As you move to conference your FY21 National Defense Authorization Act bills, we write as organizations committed to helping all children reach their full potential to respectfully request the inclusion of the section 1299M-1 – 1299M-5 of the House FY21 National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 6395. Section 1299M-1 – 1299M-5 contains the Global Child Thrive Act (H.R. 4864), which, along with its Senate counterpart (S. 2715), enjoys strong bipartisan support.

The Global Child Thrive Act would integrate Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions into U.S. foreign assistance programs supporting vulnerable children and their families, thereby improving the positive impact of these programs without calling for additional funding. ECD interventions are simple and cost-effective methods of building brain architecture in young children and include training caregivers to provide age-appropriate mental stimulation and nurturing care such as singing and reading.

The foundations for a healthy and productive life are set in childhood. A child can only reach their full potential under healthy, nurturing, and safe conditions that promote good growth, learning, and development. The cost of inaction is enormous – an estimated 250 million children in low- and middle-income countries are growing up with stunted brains and bodies due to poor nutrition, lack of stimulation, and exposure to stress, and an estimated 291 million children are living with disabilities. Cost effective, strategic interventions made during a child's early years can mitigate and help overcome the negative impact of poverty and toxic stress and aid in identifying and supporting children with developmental delays or disabilities. ECD interventions also promote bonds between children and their caregivers, providing them a “buffer” to outside shocks and stressors. Particularly in crisis and war contexts, young children are vulnerable to a range of compounding risks that stem from prolonged adversity such as displacement, disaster, extreme poverty, exposure to violence or neglect.

Building the brain architecture of children will result in long-lasting gains that reap benefits, not only for the children themselves, but for their families, communities, and nations. Studies show that investment in quality ECD programs can produce a 13 percent return on investment per year by improving health outcomes, boosting salaries, improving the

economy, and reducing a country's deficit.<sup>1</sup> By incorporating ECD interventions into current health and nutrition programming, we are making more effective and impactful use of our foreign aid funding.

**As you work to conference your respective NDAA bills, we urge you to ensure inclusion of the Castro-Fitzpatrick amendment in your final FY21 National Defense Authorization Act.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days	Life for Mothers
Abt Associates	Maestral International
Amal Alliance, Inc.	Management Sciences for Health
American Academy of Pediatrics	Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital
American Public Health Association	Medical IMPACT
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Basic Education Coalition	Oregon Health & Science University
Bethany Christian Services	Partnership for Early Childhood Development & Disability Rights
Bread for the World	PATH
Catholic Relief Services	RESULTS
ChildFund International	RISE Institute
Children's HeartLink	RTI International
Child Health Foundation	Save the Children
Children International	Sesame Workshop
CORE Group	Smile Train
Early Childhood Development Task Force	SPOON
Early Opportunities LLC	The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS
Education Development Center	The De Waal Foundation
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation	The Hunger Project
Edesia	The LEGO Foundation
Feed the Children	UNICEF USA
Food for the Hungry	WaterAid
Global Campaign for Education – US	World Education, Inc.
Global Citizen	World Learning
Global Partners United LLC	World Vision US
Global Water 2020	Zero to Three
IRD Bangladesh	
International Rescue Committee	
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics	
John Snow, Inc.	

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<sup>1</sup>Heckman, J. et al (2017). Quantifying the Life-cycle Benefits of a Prototypical Early Childhood Program. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 23479, JEL No. C93,I28,J13. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23479.pdf>