

November 18, 2019

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

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

The Honorable Eliot Engel  
Chairman  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael McCaul  
Ranking Member  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**Subject: Endorsement of the Global Child Thrive Act 2019**

Dear Chairmen Risch and Engel and Ranking Members Menendez and McCaul:

As organizations committed to helping all children reach their full potential, we are writing in support of S. 2715/H.R. 4864, the *Global Child Thrive Act of 2019* introduced by Senators Roy Blunt and Chris Coons and Representatives Joaquin Castro and Brian Fitzpatrick. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation would ensure that Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions are integrated into U.S. foreign assistance programs serving young children and their families. ECD interventions include training caregivers to provide age-appropriate mental stimulation and nurturing care such as singing and reading, playing with colorful objects, and responsive interaction, and enabling health workers to monitor children's development, early detect children with delays or disabilities, and provide appropriate care and referrals.

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 – 250 million children in low- and middle-income countries suffer from poor development due to inadequate nutrition, lack of stimulation, learning, nurturing care, and exposure to stress. Cost effective, strategic interventions made during a child's early years can mitigate and help overcome the negative impact of poverty and toxic stress.<sup>1</sup>

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>2</sup> By incorporating ECD interventions into current health and nutrition programming, we are making more effective and impactful use of our foreign aid funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Black, M. et al (2017). Advancing Early Childhood Development: from Science to Scale 1. Early childhood development coming of age: Science through the life course. *The Lancet*, 389(10064), 77-90. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)31389-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31389-7)

<sup>2</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>

As organizations serving and supporting children around the globe, we write in strong support of S. 2715/H.R. 4864 and urge your committees to advance this legislation as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days  
Abt Associates  
Amal Alliance, Inc.  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Public Health Association  
Basic Education Coalition  
Bread for the World  
ChildFund International  
Children's HeartLink  
Child Health Foundation  
Children International  
CORE Group  
Early Childhood Development Task Force  
Early Opportunities LLC  
Education Development Center  
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation  
Edesia Nutrition  
Feed the Children  
Food for the Hungry  
Global Campaign for Education – US  
Global Citizen  
Global Partners United LLC  
Global Water 2020  
IRD Bangladesh  
International Rescue Committee  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine,  
Department of Pediatrics  
John Snow, Inc.

Life for Mothers  
Maestral International  
Management Sciences for Health  
Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital  
Medical IMPACT  
National Association for the Education of  
Young Children  
Oregon Health & Science University  
Partnership for Early Childhood Development  
& Disability Rights  
PATH  
RESULTS  
RISE Institute  
RTI International  
Sesame Workshop  
Smile Train  
SPOON  
The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS  
The De Waal Foundation  
The Hunger Project  
The LEGO Foundation  
UNICEF USA  
WaterAid  
World Education, Inc.  
World Learning  
World Vision US  
Zero to Three