
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.\(^1\) 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
Abt Associates
Amal Alliance, Inc.
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Public Health Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Basic Education Coalition
Bethany Christian Services
Bread for the World
Catholic Relief Services
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
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
Save the Children
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

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