November 18, 2020

Dear President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris:

Children are and will always be the future of our nation. However, children, youth and families are in a time of crisis across the nation as the health, economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic take root. This crisis arises on top of the glaring disparities that have existed in many communities for centuries. We are at a unique crossroads, presented with an opportunity to rebuild better systems and create more prosperous futures for ALL of our nation’s children with an eye toward promoting long-term racial, ethnic and socioeconomic equity.

To realize this opportunity and reimagine our systems for optimal health, well-being and development, we, the undersigned, respectfully request the establishment of a White House Office on Children and Youth and a White House Conference on Children and Youth to elevate the needs of children, youth and their families in your Administration.

Out of this crisis must come leadership to secure a prosperous future for the next generation. Establishing a White House Office on Children and Youth would bring sustained attention to research and policy recommendations, enhance alignment and coordination of federal programs and investments, and ultimately set our country on a trajectory of wellbeing, prosperity and thriving for the future. The Office would liaise with the President, Vice President, Cabinet Secretaries and Congress to ensure that addressing the unique needs of children is a regular consideration in policy decisions. It would also develop and advance a National Children’s Strategy and all-of-government Children’s Budget that would set forth an aspirational yet achievable vision, including the related outcomes goals and metrics, to make measurable progress toward rebuilding systems for children.

Furthermore, since 1909, White House Conferences on Children have led to action within and beyond the government sector, including the growth of adoption agencies, Administrative action to strengthen the Amber Alert system and greater awareness of research on early brain development that informed subsequent policy and resource allocations. Given the enormous stressors on children and families compounded by the pandemic, there is a powerful opportunity for another Conference to spur collective action across the public, nonprofit and private sectors.

Due to the pandemic and economic recession, children and youth across the country have experienced rising rates of poverty, hunger and homelessness. Due to school closures, children are experiencing significant learning loss and mental health challenges. Rates for vaccinations,
primary and preventive services among children in Medicaid and CHIP have steeply declined. Child care capacity in the United States could be cut in half, which is expected to exacerbate existing disparities in child care availability across racial and socioeconomic communities. In the wake of these major challenges, the Office and Conference should focus on how to reduce child poverty, reduce health and educational disparities, and achieve equitable outcomes for children and youth to ensure they can enter child care, early education and school healthy and ready to learn.

A coordinated entity to address children’s needs, along with a high-level leader charged with advancing an agenda for children is not a novel concept. Across the country, Republican and Democratic governors have created impactful state-level entities to cut across silos and prioritize the needs of children. Internationally, many of our peer countries have implemented leadership positions, ranging from children’s commissioners to ombudsman and Children’s Ministers tasked with improving child health and wellbeing. However, no similar entity exists in the federal bureaucracy for children in the United States. As a result, children, who lack formal structures to advocate for themselves, frequently become an afterthought during major policy debates. Now is the time to prioritize children, youth and families through a White House Office on Children and Youth and a White House Conference on Children and Youth.

We look forward to engaging with you on this critical and timely proposal. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Organizations and Individuals listed in alphabetical order)

Lead Organizers

Education Redesign Lab, Harvard Graduate School of Education
First Focus on Children
Forum for Youth Investment
Mental Health America
Nemours Children’s Health System

National Organizations

The 100th Meridian
ADHD Symptoms Clinic
Adolescents and Children Together for Health (ACT for Health)
Afterschool Alliance
Agenda for Children
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
Alchemist Foundation
Alliance for a Healthier Generation
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
The Amend Group for Psychological, Educational, and Gifted Services
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Suicidology
American Camp Association
American Diversity Group
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychological Association
America's Promise Alliance
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Boys Town
Camp Fire National
The Care Institute
Center for Community Resilience
Center for Community Schools
Center for Health Care Strategies
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Child Care Aware® of America
Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
Children's Advocacy Alliance
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Children’s Funding Project
Children's Health Council
Children's HealthWatch
Children’s Healthy Weight Research Group
Children's Home Society of America (CHSA)
Children's Institute
Children Now
The Children's Partnership
Clinical Psychology Associates
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Community Schools
Coalition for the Promotion of Behavioral Health
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Community Catalyst
Communities In Schools National Office
Community Health Centers, Inc.
Council for Professional Recognition
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
Early Ages Healthy Stages
Early Care and Learning Partnership
Early Opportunities LLC
EDGE Consulting Partners
Every Child Succeeds
Families USA
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Family Connects International
Family Voices
First Five Years Fund
Foster America
Foster Care to Success
Friends of the Children
Funding the Next Generation
Futures Without Violence
Genesis Health Consulting
Girls Inc.
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
Guiding Bright
Healthy Families America
Healthy Schools Campaign
Help Me Grow National Center, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Holt International
Ignite Afterschool
InnerCity Struggle
Inseparable
Integrated Care for Kids-InCK Marks Initiative
International Social Service - USA
Johnson Group Consulting, Inc.
Jump IN for Healthy Kids
Juvenile Law Center
The Kennedy Forum
Kennedy Krieger Institute
Kids Impact Initiative
Leading for Kids
Lisa Stone Pritzker Family Foundation
McNary Group
MENTOR
National Afterschool Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
Prevent Child Abuse America

Prevention Institute

PRIME Center for Health Equity, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Psychology Consultation Specialists

Reach Out and Read

Ready for School, Ready for Life

Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness

ResourceFull Consulting, LLC

School-Based Health Alliance

Search Institute

Society of Behavioral Medicine

Society of Pediatric Psychology

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine

Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice

Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics

Society for Research in Child Development

StriveTogether

Together for Girls

The Trevor Project

Trust for America’s Health

University of South Carolina Research Center for Child Well-Being

UPLIFT

Values to Action

Vanderbilt Center for Child Health Policy
Well Being Trust
YMCA of the USA
Youth Development Resource Center
Youthprise
ZERO TO THREE

State and Local Organizations
Advocate Children's Hospital
Akron Children's Hospital
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Blank Children's Hospital - UnityPoint Health
Blue Shield of California Foundation
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston College Center for Optimized Student Support
California AfterSchool Network
The California Children’s Trust
CareerSource Central Florida
Ceres Community Project
Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin
Children's Home Society of North Carolina
Children’s Home Society of Washington
Children's Hospital Colorado
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
Children’s Mercy Kansas City
Children's Minnesota
Children's National Hospital
Children's Wisconsin
ChristianaCare
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Connecticut After School Network
Connecticut Association for Human Services
Connecticut Children's Collective
DC Action for Children
Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association
Delaware Department of Education
Delaware State Education Association
Early Childhood Alliance Onondaga
Early Learning Multnomah's Parent Accountability Council
Families Forward VA
Family & Children's Trust Fund of Virginia
First 5 Alameda County
First 5 Association of California
First 5 California
Florida Children's Council
Foundation for a Healthier West Orange
Georgia Dental Hygienists' Association
Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare
Groundwork Ohio
Hathaway Sycamores
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia
Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County FL
IMPACT Autism Lab/Dell Children's Medical Center
Indiana Afterschool Network
Juliette's House Child Abuse Intervention Center
Kansas Action for Children
Lamoille Family Center
Lanai Community Health Center
Laraway Youth & Family Services
Latino Coalition for a Healthy CA
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
Maine Children's Alliance
Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Maryland State Family Child Care Association
Massachusetts Citizens for Children - "MassKids"
Mass General Hospital for Children
Mental Health America of Georgia
The MetroHealth System
Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board
Mississippi Center for Advanced Medicine
Missouri AfterSchool Network
Missouri KidsFirst
MnAEYC-MnSACA (Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children - Minnesota School-Age Care Alliance)
MSU Denver's Early Family Literacy Program
Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital
MUSC Health / Medical Univ of South Carolina
National Autism Association NY Metro Chapter
Nationwide Children's Hospital
NC Center for Afterschool Programs
NC Child
New England Center for OCD and Anxiety, Boston
New Hampshire Afterschool Network
NJSACC: Statewide Afterschool Network
Northeast Kingdom Community Action
Nutrition Policy Institute, University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Ohio Afterschool Network
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
Oregon Child Abuse Solutions
OregonASK
Pediatric Physicians' Organization at Boston Children's Hospital
Pennsylvania School Age Child Care Alliance
Prevent Child Abuse Alabama
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona
Prevent Child Abuse NC
Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
Primary Children’s Hospital
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Rodel Foundation of Delaware
Rutgers University
SaySo Strong Able Youth Speaking Out
Scarsdale Village CBT
School's Out Washington
The Scott Foundation
Seattle Children's
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
The Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, American Psychological Association, Div 53
SouthSide Early Childhood Center
St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital
St. Louis Children's Hospital
Tennessee Justice Center
Tufts Children's Hospital
Turner Psychological & Consulting Services, LLC
UNITE-LA
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
University of Rochester
University of South Carolina/ALL4SC
Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (VPOST)
Voices for Georgia's Children
Wake Forest School of Medicine and Brenner Children’s Hospital
West Orange Healthcare District

Wolfson Children's Hospital

Wyoming Afterschool Alliance

Yamhill Community Care

**Individuals**

**Kristy Benoit Allen,** PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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**Richard P. Barth,** PhD, MSW, Professor and Chair, Executive Committee of the Grand Challenges for Social Work, University of Maryland School of Social Work

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**Allison Blake,** MSW, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, Child and Family Agency of SECT; former Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Children and Families

**Dale A. Blyth,** PhD, Professor Emeritus in the College of Education & Human Development at the University of Minnesota

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Scott Johnson, Statewide Coordinator, DULCE-Vermont

Patricia K. Kerig, PhD, Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Utah; Editor in Chief, Journal of Traumatic Stress; Co-Director, Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice

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Barry Zuckerman, MD, Professor and Chair Emeritus Of Pediatrics and Public Health, Boston University of School of Medicine; Co-founder of Reach Out and Read, Health Leads, Healthy Steps

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