



## Support Funding for Children, Youth, and Families

April 22, 2025

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Brian Schatz, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chair  
House of Representatives Appropriations  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
Department of State, and Related Programs

The Honorable Lois Frankel, Ranking Member  
House of Representatives Appropriations  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
Department of State, and Related Programs

Dear Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Frankel,

The *Child Partnership* is a growing coalition that supports a results-driven approach to U.S. foreign assistance that includes children and youth in smart, efficient investments. On behalf of the Partnership, we urge you to support investments in children, youth, and families in the fiscal year 2026 Senate State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPS) bill and the House National Security, Department of State and Related Programs (NSRP) bill.

We urge you to provide **at least \$60 billion for the International Affairs Budget/150 account, and at least level funding for accounts that impact children and youth**, including (but not limited to), the Vulnerable Children Account; Nutrition; Maternal and Child Health; Combatting Child Marriage; Water and Sanitation, the Nita M. Lowey Basic Education Fund; UNICEF Core Resources; Migration and Refugee Assistance; International Disaster Assistance; PEPFAR, and the State Department's Child Protection Compacts.

Approximately 41% of the global population of 7.7 billion is aged 24 or under.<sup>1</sup> Yet in FY2024, federal spending on children and youth internationally was approximately 0.09% of the total federal budget, making up 10.16% of our foreign assistance.<sup>2</sup> For American children to grow up in a world that is safer, stronger, and more prosperous, we must ensure that young people around the world are protected, healthy, and educated.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. (2024). *World Development Indicators: Population estimates and projections (Table 2.1)*. Retrieved March 25, 2025, from <https://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.1>

<sup>2</sup> [Children's Budget 2024 | First Focus on Children](#)

### **Investing in Children and Youth Makes America Safer**

**Research shows that the risk of conflict and political instability decreases if the basic needs of young people are met.** Supporting routine immunizations for young people and disease monitoring for communities prevents diseases from reaching American shores, and secondary education reduces young people's involvement in violence and overall risk of conflict by nearly half.

### **Investing in Children and Youth Makes America Stronger**

**U.S. adversaries are ready, willing, and able to influence future generations in low- and middle-income countries if the U.S. leaves a leadership void.** China's Belt and Road Initiative has investment agreements with at least 147 countries, giving China significant influence over global policy. If young people grow up looking to China, Russia, or others for basic services and opportunities, if they see these countries investing in their future, if they travel to these countries for higher learning, then the U.S. will undoubtedly lose its standing as a world leader for generations to come.

### **Investing in Children and Youth Makes America More Prosperous**

Programs for young people have a strong return on investment and facilitate local and global economic growth. The return on investment for global education programs is approximately 10%, which has significant implications on the GDP of growing economies. Every \$1 invested in immunization yields more than \$50 in savings in healthcare costs, lost wages, and lost productivity.<sup>3</sup>

**Future generations of Americans will increasingly depend on the global economy for their jobs and financial security.** Half of U.S. exports currently go to low- and middle-income countries, totaling \$600 billion annually, a trend that is likely to continue.

To ensure that future generations of Americans are safer, stronger, and more prosperous, we must consider the world we are shaping for them. Effective and efficient foreign assistance programs for young people can ensure global health, wealth, and security.

Below you will find additional information related to our request, including funding and language requests, as well as justifications for both top-line funding and specific accounts.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this critical issue. We look forward to speaking with your office about investing in young people. If you have any questions, please contact Leila Milani, [lmilani@futureswithoutviolence.org](mailto:lmilani@futureswithoutviolence.org), or Suzanne Berman, [Sberman@ChildFund.org](mailto:Sberman@ChildFund.org). We will contact your staff to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

The Child Partnership

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<sup>3</sup> ShotAtLife. (n.d.). *U.S. investment in immunization toolkit messages and graphics*. Adobe Express. <https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/q9clWt30H5rvJ>

## FY26 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Topline ask: International Affairs Budget

**International Affairs Budget (Function 150 Account): At least \$60 billion** (FY24 enacted \$60.01 billion)

#### **State**

**Justification:** U.S. foreign assistance makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. As a key tool of soft diplomacy, programs included in the international affairs budget promote political stability; stop disease outbreaks before they put Americans at risk; build and grow export markets for American goods; improve the economies of current and future trade partners, and solidify America's global leadership. If America steps back from the foreign assistance programs, our reputation will suffer, and our adversaries, including China, will step into the leadership void. It is in our economic and national security interests to robustly fund the international affairs budget (Function 150 Account).

**FY26 Bill Language:** The President shall obligate and disburse the entire Function 150 Account as directed by Congress.

**Justification of Bill Language:** The international affairs budget makes America safer and more secure. It boosts trade and goodwill for the U.S.; it reduces the need for U.S. troops on the ground; and stops diseases from reaching our shores.

**Report Language Request:** The Committee recognizes the strategic importance of investing in the children, youth, and families around the world. Giving young people the skills, tools, and safety they need to thrive supports political stability, global security, and economic prosperity. Investing in young people strengthens America's reputation abroad and positions the U.S. as a leader for future generations. The Committee encourages relevant agencies, in consultation with relevant congressional committees, to take a comprehensive whole child approach to U.S. foreign assistance, recognizing the critical, interconnected needs of vulnerable children and youth.

**Report Language Justification:** Strategic investments in children and youth around the world make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Addressing the basic needs of young people in low- and middle-income countries increases political stability, reduces the risk of diseases reaching our shores, counters the influence of China and other American adversaries, improves the global economy, and creates and builds trading relationships in growing markets. Programs in maternal and child health, nutrition, basic education, and child protection have strong returns on investment. Low- and middle-income countries have some of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in the world. These individuals must see America as a valued partner, so they value American ideals such as freedom and democracy, strengthening America's long-term position as a global leader.

## Account Requests and Justification

### **Vulnerable Children - FY 26 Request \$31.5 million (FY24 enacted: \$31.5 million)**

#### **USAID, Global Health**

**Justification:** Funding \$31.5 million for the Vulnerable Children Account would support the implementation and reporting as mandated by the Global Child Thrive law, which was enacted into law on January 1, 2021. Enacting funding for this account is necessary to comply with the law. U.S. investments for early childhood development programs have long-term positive impacts on individuals, families, and societies, increasing productivity and health and reducing poverty and inequality. Supporting early child development programming, family care for vulnerable children, and childcare workforce creation is beneficial to the U.S. as it supports countries on their journey to self-reliance by which they can sustainably finance, manage, and deliver services that lead to stable, resilient, and prosperous families and communities within countries of origin. It is in the best interest of the United States to have countries become self-reliant so that they can become future trading partners; in return, this fosters our long-term national security. Additionally, these investments support programs which reduce violence – a root cause of migration. Addressing root causes of migration will allow people to remain in their home countries and put less of a burden on the United States immigration system.

### **Maternal and Child Health - FY 26 Request \$915 million (FY24 enacted: \$915 million)**

#### **USAID, Global Health**

**Justification:** The USAID maternal and child health bilateral account provides resources that improve the accessibility and quality of basic interventions that save millions of lives in countries where the burden of preventable maternal and child deaths is the highest. The account supports the training of health workers, increases access to skilled birth attendants, and promotes the delivery of childhood immunizations globally, including through direct support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and polio vaccination campaigns. Sustained funding for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, would enable Gavi to continue supporting the rollout of the malaria vaccines, increase access to routine immunizations, and help to prevent outbreaks. Similarly, USAID's polio program funding supports surveillance and outbreak responses to polio and other diseases, such as Marburg and Ebola. It is in the national security interests of the U.S. to prevent disease outbreaks at their source. One of the most effective ways to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases in the U.S. is to improve vaccination rates abroad, as most cases occur following travel by a U.S. citizen overseas.

### **Combatting Child Marriage Account - FY 26 Request \$20 million (FY24 enacted: \$20 million)**

#### **USAID, Global Programs**

**Justification:** Globally 1 in 5 girls are married before their 18th birthday- an estimated 640 million women and girls alive today who were married as children. Despite decades of progress, rates of child, early, and forced marriage have spiked in recent years. Rates of child marriage are even higher in times

of conflict and humanitarian crisis. In fact, 9 out of 10 countries with the highest child marriage rates are fragile or extremely fragile states. In the Sahel, for example, more than half of adolescent girls, or an estimated 20 million girls, are married as children; child brides are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education, and safety and commonly face risks from early pregnancy, childbirth, and violence, including intimate partner violence, all of which often perpetuate cycles of poverty.

Child marriage has far-reaching consequences for communities and nations, restricting economic growth, stability, and progress by limiting the potential of girls and young women. Societies that fail to invest in their full participation face long-term economic and social disadvantages. Ending child marriage not only strengthens the economic security of individuals, families, and communities but also contributes to broader global stability. A world where countries can achieve self-reliance aligns with U.S. foreign policy objectives, ultimately reinforcing America's stability and prosperity.

### **Nutrition - FY 26 Request \$165 million (FY24 enacted: \$165 million)**

#### **USAID, Global Health**

**Justification:** Malnutrition is the greatest threat to child survival and optimal brain development worldwide, killing roughly 3 million children before their fifth birthday every year. High-impact nutrition interventions make a significant difference for the future of many children experiencing malnutrition in their communities. Every \$1 invested in nutrition programming has the potential to yield up to \$35 in economic returns. An investment of \$165 million could prevent stunting, cure cases of anemia, support mothers to breastfeed, and provide life-saving treatment for children experiencing wasting in development settings.

### **Basic Education - FY 26 Request at least \$922 million (FY24 enacted: \$922 million, FY23 enacted: \$970 million)**

#### **USAID, Basic Education**

**Justification:** International basic education programs make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous. The READ Act of 2017 and its reauthorization in 2024 outlines the U.S. Government's commitment to improving access to quality education. Education programs encourage future trade partners, improve the global economy, bolster peace and security, and strengthen public health. In FY23, U.S. Government education programs supported 44 million learners across pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational, and workforce development programs. These efforts strengthen the U.S. reputation abroad, particularly in areas with large populations of children and youth. Research shows that increasing access to education reduces political violence and conflict. Doubling the percentage of youth with secondary education can cut the risk of conflict in half, and secondary education can reduce the likelihood of young people supporting political violence by 48%.

251 million children are out of school globally, and three out of four children in low- to middle- income countries cannot read and understand simple text. One in six children live in areas affected by conflict,

and nearly half of all refugee children were out of school in 2024. Providing educational opportunities for these children and youth will provide a pathway for them to respect and admire the U.S. and its values, avoid political conflicts, and support their countries' trade partnership with America.

**Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) - FY 26 Request: At least \$451 million (FY24 enacted: \$451 million, FY23 enacted: \$475 million)**

#### **USAID, Development Assistance and Economic Support Fund**

**Justification:** Twenty-five percent of people still lack safe drinking water in their homes, and 40% of the world's population lack safely managed sanitation. Safe water and adequate sanitation is essential to child survival and development, improving children's education, increasing productivity, and building resilience in the face of disease and disaster. Since 2008, USAID has helped 70 million people access sustainable drinking water services and 54.8 million people access sustainable sanitation services. Under the U.S. Global Water Strategy (2022-2027), under Congressional requirement under PL 113-289, USAID seeks to reach 22 million people with new or improved access to water and sanitation, half of whom have never had access to basic water and/or sanitation. These investments in WASH access in homes, health care facilities, and schools directly contribute to other U.S. global health priorities affecting children, including improving child nutrition, reducing acute malnutrition, and ending preventable child and maternal deaths.

**UNICEF Core Resources - FY 26 Request: At least \$137 million (FY24 enacted: \$137 million)**

#### **State, International Organizations and Programs**

**Justification:** Overlapping crises – from persistent conflict to natural disasters and disease outbreaks and rising levels of food insecurity– have made UNICEF's work more important than ever. Today, 1 in 6 children live amid conflict and insecurity, with record-high levels of population displacement and migration. These trends increase children's vulnerability to crime and violent extremism and fuel further instability. UNICEF and its partners are rising to the challenge, helping to minimize displacement and build self-reliance. UNICEF is also on the frontlines of dangerous disease outbreaks, from Ebola to mpox, helping stop the spread of these dangerous diseases before they reach American shores. In 2024, UNICEF supported mothers and babies at more than 34 million live births; reached 210 million children under the age of 5 to detect and treat wasting – the most severe form of malnutrition; provided safe water to nearly 36 million people; extended access to education to nearly 40 million children (half of them girls) and more than 17 million children living in crisis settings, and responded to one or more infectious disease outbreaks or other public health emergencies in 98 different countries. Contributing at least \$137 million to the account will help ensure that UNICEF can continue to reach children with health, protection, and nutrition services that also help reduce drivers of conflict, migration, and instability. This work not only assists children to reach their full potential, but it also advances U.S. interests and American values while promoting a more secure, stable and healthier world.

**International Disaster Assistance - FY 26 Request: \$4.78 billion (FY24 enacted: \$4.78 billion)**

## **USAID, International Development Assistance**

**Justification:** The needs of children affected by emergencies have reached an unprecedented scale. In 2024, an estimated 473 million children - more than 1 in 6 - lived in areas affected by armed conflict. Over 47% of these children have been forcibly displaced. Complex conflicts and natural disasters are increasing in frequency and accelerating the spread of other diseases like malaria and measles. The U.S. is currently experiencing a measles outbreak that resulted in a child's death, the first in the U.S. in 22 years. International disaster assistance helps combat diseases amid humanitarian crises and conflicts, addresses these disease outbreaks before they enter our borders, and equips countries with life-saving medicine and treatment to address diseases amid humanitarian crises, conflict and insecurity, increasing climate events, and other sudden-onset emergencies.

**Migration and Refugee Assistance - FY 26 Request: \$3.93 billion (FY24 enacted: \$3.93 billion)**

### **State, Migration and Refugee Assistance**

**Justification:** The needs of children affected by emergencies have reached an unprecedented scale. In 2024, an estimated 473 million children - 1 in 6 - lived in areas affected by armed conflict. Over 47% of these children have been forcibly displaced. The MRA account works to mitigate and resolve conflict-related displacement and support humanitarian action and diplomacy for displaced populations. Complex conflicts are increasing in frequency and severity. Additionally, the fund manages migration in the Western Hemisphere, including irregular migration from Central America to the United States.

**President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) - FY 26 Request: \$6.045 billion (FY24 enacted: \$6.045 billion)**

### **State, HIV/AIDS**

**Justification:** Sustaining funding for PEPFAR would demonstrate to the world that the U.S. remains fully committed to ending AIDS as a public health threat. This investment will motivate other funders to step up as well. PEPFAR, the Global Fund, UNAIDS, and other multi- and bilateral U.S. investments in global HIV/AIDS are a cornerstone platform for U.S. global health programs and one of the major public health successes of this generation. The programs' accomplishments speak for themselves— since 2003, 26 million lives have been saved, 7.8 million babies have been born HIV-free, and 6.6 million orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers are being supported and protected. Millions of new HIV infections have been prevented as a result of generous, bipartisan investments in ending AIDS.

In FY24, PEPFAR supported 20.6 million people on antiretroviral treatment (ART) across 55 countries, and since the inception of PEPFAR, 5.5 million babies have been born HIV-free as a result of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programs funded by PEPFAR. The Global Fund, which provides nearly 30 percent of all international financing for HIV/AIDS, has saved more than 44 million lives since its inception in 2002 and reached 17.9 million people alone with HIV prevention services in 2023. Given the disruptions in HIV/AIDS services abroad, it is in the national security interest of the United States to

continue the flow of funds for these critical services, have countries become self-reliant, and signal to countries that the U.S. remains a leader in eradicating HIV/AIDS as it has done for over two decades.

**FY26 Report language:** Orphans and Vulnerable Children. — The Committee directs that 10 percent of overall bilateral HIV funding be provided to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) programs and that the nutrition, protection, and family-strengthening interventions for children who are living with, orphaned by, or at risk of HIV, are prioritized. The Committee deems socio-economic OVC programs to be lifesaving as they ensure orphans and vulnerable children are connected to testing and treatment programs, adhere to treatment regimens if they are HIV positive, that they receive nutritious food to remain healthy, and that they are protected from violence, abuse, and sex trafficking. Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of the act, the Committee directs the Secretary of State to provide an explanation for how the 10 percent set aside for orphans and vulnerable children was met for the last two fiscal years, including country-level accounting.

**Justification of FY26 report language:** By Congressional earmark, PEPFAR invested 10% of its funding in the care and support of orphans and vulnerable children, which protected and mitigated the impact of HIV on these children. The burden of HIV negatively impacts all aspects of a child's life — their mental and physical health, their nutritional status, their educational achievements, and their risk for future HIV infection. The threat and burden of HIV puts a tremendous strain on all aspects of socio-economic and health outcomes in an affected community. PEPFAR OVC programs have supported 6.6 million orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers with interventions that ensure affected children enjoy good nutrition, access to school and psychosocial support to address stigma and that their caregivers have access to savings and livelihood support. These holistic services keep children's families together and functioning and connect them to HIV treatment services if they are HIV positive (thereby ensuring children stay alive).

**Child Protection Compacts - FY 26 Request: \$12.5 million (FY24 enacted: \$12.5 million)**

#### **State, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) TIP Grants**

**FY26 Report Language:** Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the headings "Development Assistance", "Economic Support Fun", "Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia," "International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement", \$12,500,000 be made available to the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) for Child Protection Compacts (CPC)

**Justification:** CPCs are \$5 million multi-year commitments between the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (JTIP) and partner governments to bolster efforts to combat child labor and sex trafficking. The CPC Partnership supports the sustainable development of partner governments' capacity to hold perpetrators of child sex and labor trafficking accountable under the law, provide comprehensive services for child trafficking survivors, and expand child trafficking prevention and awareness. The Philippines, a global hotspot for online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, has participated in two CPC Partnerships, which have supported its capacity to improve prevention efforts, provide effective and appropriate child protective services to victims and identify perpetrators

and bring them to justice. An FY26 allocation of at least \$12.5 million for CPC Partnerships will allow for additional compacts to support governments around the world that currently lack the infrastructure and capacity to respond to similar forms of child trafficking.

**Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) DRL Grants: \$10,000,000** (FY24 enacted: \$10 Million)

### **State, DRL Grants**

**Report Language:** "The Committee directs that, of the funds allocated to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) (\$10,000,000), \$2,000,000 shall be utilized for initiatives that explicitly prioritize advocacy and capacity-building activities aimed at protecting children and youth.

**Justification:** The alarming rise in child sex and labor trafficking globally underscores the urgent need for targeted U.S. support through grants, such as the proposed \$2 million allocation from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). Children now account for approximately 27% of all human trafficking victims worldwide, with girls making up two-thirds of these cases.<sup>4</sup> According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), detected trafficking cases have increased by 25%, with a particularly sharp rise in child exploitation and forced labor.<sup>5</sup> Compounding this crisis is the surge in online sexual exploitation— In 2022, the US National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) analyzed over 32 million reports of child sexual abuse material received from across the globe, an 87% increase in the number of reports processed in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Save the Children. (n.d.). *Child trafficking awareness*. Save the Children.

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/child-trafficking-awareness>

<sup>5</sup> Save the Children. (n.d.). *Child trafficking awareness*. Save the Children.

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/child-trafficking-awareness>

<sup>6</sup> WeProtect Global Alliance. (2023). *Global Threat Assessment 2023*. <https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-Threat-Assessment-2023-English.pdf>