



children's defense fund

Leave No Child Behind®

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New Report: U.S. Can Reduce Child Poverty by 57 Percent Right Now

Children's Defense Fund study shows America could lift 5.5 million children out of poverty immediately by investing in nine modest policy improvements

Washington, D.C. – America can immediately lift millions of children out of poverty and reduce child poverty by 57 percent by making modest investments in policies that work, according to a new report released today by the Children's Defense Fund. *Ending Child Poverty Now*, the second edition of a groundbreaking report first released in 2015, details the devastating impacts of poverty on children and our nation. It outlines nine policy improvements that, enacted together, would benefit 95 percent of all poor children, lifting 5.5 million of them out of poverty entirely. The report also shows how our nation can easily pay for the \$52.3 billion it would take to implement these changes with modest tradeoffs, including changes to the \$1.9 trillion tax reform package passed in 2017.

Facts on the child poverty crisis:

- Nearly 1 in 5 children in America lives in poverty.
- Nearly 4 in 10 children spend at least one year in poverty before their 18th birthday.
- Children of color and our youngest children are the poorest children.
- More than 2 in 3 poor children are children of color.
- Children who experience poverty at any point during childhood are more than three times as likely to be poor at age 30 as children who do not experience poverty.

"It is a moral disgrace and profound economic threat that nearly 1 in 5 children are poor in the wealthiest nation on earth," said Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President Emerita of the Children's Defense Fund. "Permitting more than 12.8 million of our children to live in poverty when we have the means to prevent it is unjust and unacceptable."

In the report, the Children's Defense Fund identifies improvements to nine existing policies that could be made immediately to increase employment, make work pay more for adults with children and meet more children's basic needs. The report's policy recommendations are designed not only to lift children out of poverty but also to help keep them out of poverty. The nine policy improvements are included below.

The Children's Defense Fund contracted with the Urban Institute to analyze the impacts and costs of these policy improvements and found that together, they would help children of different races and ages and in different types of families and parts of the country. The policy package would cut poverty by:

- 65 percent for Black children, reducing the Black-White child poverty gap by 30 percent
- 59 percent for Hispanic children
- 62 percent for children ages 3-5
- 59 percent for single-parent families with children
- 57 percent for children in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas

“Our report shows we can reduce child poverty right now and make a substantial down payment on ending it for good,” said MaryLee Allen, Director of Policy for the Children’s Defense Fund. “We already know what works to end child poverty. The question is not how to do it or whether we can afford it, but whether we as a nation have the will to invest in programs and policies that will help our children now.”

The report’s analysis finds that the combined policy improvements would cost about \$52.3 billion per year, just over 1 percent of the federal budget. The report offers examples of how unwinding specific provisions of the 2017 tax bill or reducing other federal spending could cover these costs, including:

- Repealing the 2017 tax bill, which would save \$280 billion in 2019 alone; or
- Taxing the accumulated wealth of the richest 0.1 percent of Americans by 1 percent more per year, which would increase federal revenues by about \$190 billion a year; or
- Repatriating offshore profits of the nation’s wealthiest corporations, which would increase federal revenue by almost \$200 billion.

“America will remain in economic and moral danger as long as we continue to squander our most important resource: our children’s potential,” said Max Lesko, National Executive Director of the Children’s Defense Fund. “We cannot afford to wait another 3, 5 or 10 years to tackle the child poverty crisis. The millions of children living in poverty right now cannot put their childhoods on hold until our leaders are ready to act—the time is now.”

The Children’s Defense Fund is urging Congress to act now to implement the federal policy improvements outlined in the report to lift millions of children out of poverty and make a substantial down payment on ending child poverty for all children.

To read the full report, [click here](#).

To read the six-page report brief, [click here](#).

To learn more about the Children’s Defense Fund’s work to end child poverty and how you can get involved, [click here](#).

Policy Improvements to Reduce Child Poverty at Least 57 Percent

Increasing Employment and Making Work Pay More for Adults with Children

- Create transitional jobs for unemployed and underemployed individuals ages 16-64 in families with children.
- Increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15.00 by 2024.
- Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for lower-income families with children.
- Make the Child Tax Credit fully refundable with additional benefits for families with young children.
- Make child care subsidies available to all eligible families below 150 percent of poverty with no co-pays.
- Make the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit refundable with a higher reimbursement rate.

Meeting Children’s Basic Needs

- Determine Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits based on USDA’s Low-Cost Food Plan for families with children and increase benefits by 31 percent.
- Make housing vouchers available to all households with children below 150 percent of poverty for whom fair market rent exceeds 50 percent of their income.

- Require child support to be fully passed through to families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), fully disregarded for TANF benefits and partially disregarded for SNAP benefits.

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The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for more than 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. We provide a strong, effective and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor children, children of color and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.