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A Precarious Imbalance: Federal Budget Proposals Leave Michigan Families Particularly Vulnerable

In the past month, three Congressional panels have begun dismantling safety net supports for low-income working families with children, highlighting Michigan's precarious reliance on federal funds for programs aimed at struggling children and families.

Three times in March, committees in the U.S. House of Representatives voted in favor of bills that would be harmful to children, specifically those abused and neglected, and from low-income families.

Shifts in federal resources for programs that strengthen families are felt particularly hard in Michigan, where we have disinvested state resources over the last several decades. Federal funds make up the lion's share – roughly three-quarters – of the budget for the state Department of Health and Human Services, and similarly 70 percent of the state Department of Education's budget comes from the federal government.

Among the recent federal actions:

In Congress, there were threats to the Children's Health Insurance Program in mid-March when the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted to make changes that would result in countless low-income children nationwide losing coverage, or for those who don't have coverage, prevent them from gaining it. CHIP provides health insurance coverage to over 100,000 Michigan children whose families live below 200% of the federal poverty level but have incomes that don't allow them to qualify for Medicaid.

Also in mid-March, the House Ways and Means voted to eliminate the Social Services Block Grant program, a source of flexible funding for programs that help the most challenged children and families. In Michigan, the Social Services Block Grant supports a variety of programs such as the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative which supports young people transitioning out of foster care, services for homeless youth, community-based juvenile justice programs, and support for families served by the child welfare system – all service areas that rely solely or very heavily on federal funds. The Congressional Committee also voted to deny the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to some low-income working families with children.

Most recently, the House Education and Workforce Committee majority has introduced a bill that would make it more complicated for schools nationwide to provide meals to hungry children in the lowest-income communities. The reauthorization for the Child Nutrition bill

introduced in a related subcommittee does not include an additional snack for children who spend long hours in child care through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, despite bipartisan support to offer a second snack and inclusion in the Senate with leadership from Senator Stabenow. And the bill falls short in many other ways to ensure children have access to healthy meals in school and in out-of-school settings.

While none of these actions have made it through the full U.S. House of Representatives, and the recommendations around the nutrition programs have not even made it out of committee, they are an indication of what will likely be on the chopping block as any spending bills continue to move through the process.

Take Action: Contact your members of Congress today and tell them to protect and invest in programs and services that help our nation's children and their families. Specifically, ask them to support federal FY 2017 appropriations that utilize additional funding approved last year by Congress to more adequately fund: early care, education and afterschool programs; child welfare and safety programs; juvenile justice and youth development programs; health care and nutrition programs; and economic security programs.

In addition, ask them to oppose any attempts to cut, eliminate or make harmful changes to the Social Security Block Grant, Children's Health Insurance Program, Child Tax Credit or child nutrition programs.

Then send a message to your state Legislators. They can be great messengers to their colleagues in the Congress about what we expect in federal action, and they need to understand the need to reinvest in Michigan families at the state level as well.

[Click here](#) to locate contact information for your elected members of Congress and the state Legislature.