Support $35 million for Vulnerable Children in FY2022

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in sending the below letter to the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee in support of Early Childhood Development and $35 million for the USAID Vulnerable Children Account in fiscal year 2022.
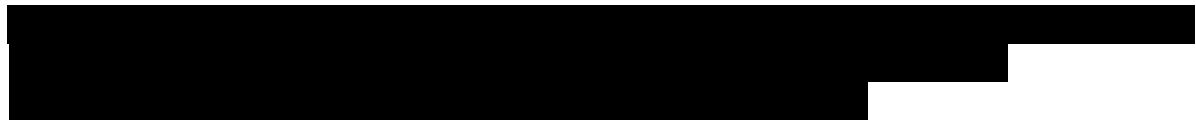
Sincerely,

Joaquin Castro Brian Fitzpatrick Member of Congress Member of Congress

LETTER TEXT

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Ranking Member Rogers,

As you begin consideration of your fiscal year 2022 State Foreign Operations Appropriations budget priorities, we strongly urge you to allocate $35 million to the Vulnerable Children account from its current level of $25 million. This funding supports the care, dignity, and safety of the world's most vulnerable children and will play a critical role in the implementation of the Global Child Thrive Act passed into law on January 1st, 2021.

Expanding funding by a modest $10 million in FY22 would allow the Children in Adversity Office to expand the integration of early childhood development interventions into new and existing foreign assistance programs serving vulnerable children and their families, per the direction of the Global Child Thrive Act. Early Childhood Development activities are inexpensive, simple interventions that build brain architecture in young children, and include everything from access to safe water and good nutrition to training caregivers to provide responsive stimulation such as singing, reading, and playing. These interventions can mitigate the negative impacts of severe poverty and produce a return on investment of 13 percent per year.

The Vulnerable Children account currently supports the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Children in Adversity office to coordinate assistance to orphans and

other vulnerable children. Resources for the account help to implement the United States Government Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity (APCCA) whole-of-government strategy to build strong beginnings through early childhood development, support for children living outside of family-based care, and protection for children from violence, abuse, and neglect. Funding for this account will also be used to support the integration of early childhood development interventions into existing U.S. government maternal and child health, immunizations, nutrition, education, and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children, in accordance with the Global Child Thrive Law.

There are currently 250 million children under age five in low- and middle-income countries at risk of not achieving their development potential due to poor nutrition and lack of cognitive stimulation. This number does not account for impacts due to COVID-19, which has disrupted the lives of children around the world. The negative impact of school and day care closures and increased economic instability has added stressors, interrupting optimal child development. Increased funding is even more critical in light of the secondary impacts of COVID-19 which have exacerbated childhood violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. The loss of parents and other caregivers is on the rise, are putting vulnerable children at further risk.

Please provide $35 million for Vulnerable Children in your State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill to better ensure that every child has the conditions for healthy growth, nurturing family-based care, development, learning, and protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

We also urge the inclusion of report language directing the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator to conduct a pilot program within targeted countries to provide the full range of early childhood development interventions in crisis affected contexts to benefit child refugees, migrants or internally displaced populations, with the goal of bridging divides between development and humanitarian assistance and taking successful projects to scale.

Sincerely,