

For Our Children: A CDF-NY Call to Action



The Children's Defense Fund envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield the power to assure they thrive. Today, on this 30th Annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths ® Celebration, the Children's Defense Fund – New York (CDF-NY) urges you to take action for our State's most vulnerable children and families.

I. RAISE YOUR VOICE TO SAVE THE CHILD TAX CREDIT!

Child poverty is an urgent and preventable crisis in New York. Prior to the pandemic, one in every five New York children – nearly 800,000 of the youngest New Yorkers – lived in poverty, with Black and Hispanic children more than twice as likely as their white peers to live in poverty. Furthermore, a higher percentage of children live in poverty in New York than in 34 other states.¹ The pandemic has pushed even more vulnerable New York children and families into poverty.



The expanded Child Tax Credit makes a critical down payment on ending child poverty, but this historic expansion is in danger of being negotiated out of the Build Back Better plan — having the morally devastating effects of plunging 3.5 million children back into poverty² and worsening racial disparities. The communities we serve have much at stake in a **robust and equitable Child Tax Credit that is permanent, inclusive of all immigrant children and fully refundable.** Without such provisions, our goal to Build Back Better for communities who have long experienced entrenched poverty and deep-rooted racial inequities will be left unrealized.

RAISE YOUR VOICE to urge Senate Majority Leader Schumer and the White House to hold the line on the expanded Child Tax Credit. Urge them to stand firm and ensure the final budget reconciliation package includes a **permanent Child Tax Credit that is robust, fully inclusive to reach all immigrant children and fully refundable** with this message: ***Now that you have lifted New York families up, do not let them down.***



¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Detailed Estimates. *Note:* To explore the Children's Defense Fund – New York's county-specific child poverty data profiles, visit <https://cdfny.org/county-profiles/>.

² Parolin, Zachary and Megan A. Curran. 2021. "Expanded Child Tax Credit Leads to Further Declines in Child Poverty in August 2021." Poverty and Social Policy Fact Sheet. Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University. <https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/s/Monthly-poverty-with-CTC-August-CPSP-2021.pdf>.

II. STAND UP FOR RAISE THE AGE!



Some in our community are calling for rollbacks to New York’s landmark 2017 Raise the Age legislation, blaming this reform for increases in gun violence. We share the deep concern over the increase in gun violence over the past 18 months, and the urgency to reverse it immediately. However, placing the blame on Raise the Age is simply false. During the first 18 months after the Raise the Age law was enacted, shootings in New York City remained the lowest they have been in decades. Only after months of COVID-19 infections, deaths, lockdowns, disconnection from necessary services and the resulting economic upheaval did gun violence increase in New York City, as it did in many cities around the country where criminal justice reforms had not been enacted.

The reality is that we can’t incarcerate our way out of gun violence. That has been tried and failed—New York spent decades laboring under the myth that children are adults with no evidence that the practice ever reduced crime rates. By the time Raise the Age passed in 2017, New York was one of only two states in the country that continued to prosecute 16 and 17-year-olds automatically as adults. This policy led to extreme disproportionate impact: the vast majority of youth facing the lifelong burden of a criminal record were Black and Brown young people living in our most vulnerable communities. Fear cannot permit these shameful and discriminatory practices to return.

We must center young people and families. During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State. More than half of those parent deaths were in three New York City boroughs: the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. A new study published in *Pediatrics* this month shows that nearly 1 in every 500 children in the U.S. has now lost a caregiver, and children of color have been disproportionately affected, with the highest level of loss happening in California, Texas and New York. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and acts of violence. According to the doctors who conducted the study, addressing the impact of this level of family death on young people will “require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities.”³



Stand Up for Raise the Age by letting your City Council Member know that you support the law, and that you are calling for a real answer to gun violence: sustained investments in public health responses, along with strategies to link youth and families to meaningful supports in addition to pathways for housing and economic security.

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The Children’s Defense Fund-New York (CDF-NY) has a unique approach to improving conditions for children, combining research, public education, policy development, direct services, and advocacy. A recognized authority in the endeavor to protect New York children and strengthen their families, CDF-NY serves as a resource and partner for children, families and organizations throughout New York State.



³ Hillis SD, Blenkinsop A, Villaveces A, et al. 2021. “COVID-19-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death in the United States.” *Pediatrics*. doi: 10.1542/peds.2021-053760.