CDF MISSION

The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides 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.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by individual donations, foundation, corporate and government grants.

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*deceased
Dear colleagues, supporters, partners and friends,

The mission of CDF has never been more important than it is today during these perilous times for children and for our nation. Despite unprecedented challenges and threats to the safety and wellbeing of America’s children, we must all refuse to go backwards. No matter who holds the reins of political power, CDF will move forward in our mission to Leave No Child Behind® and ensure every child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage into adulthood.

After 45 years as President of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), I announced in November 2018 that I would transition into a new role in January 2019 as President Emerita in the Office of the Founder. This new role allows me to step away from CDF’s day-to-day responsibilities and focus all my energies on building a transformative movement for children to end child poverty and inequality through servant leadership development at key spiritual retreats and movement-building convenings at CDF’s Haley Farm.

I am proud of CDF’s groundbreaking work over the past 45 years and the significant progress we have made for millions of children and families. But so much work remains to be done. I look forward to working with the Board of Directors, on which I continue to serve, in finding a new President to lead CDF into its next chapter who is committed to taking on the continuing challenges our children face today and in the future. I am confident CDF will not miss a beat during this transition. As the national search commences for a new CDF President, National Executive Director Max Lesko, in whom I have every confidence, is overseeing CDF’s day-to-day operations and reporting to the Board of Directors.

I am so grateful for your support of and partnership with CDF over the years. I hope you will join CDF and me as we continue to provide a strong, independent and unwavering voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves.

With your support we will continue to move forward to ensure no child is left behind.

Marian Wright Edelman
President Emerita
Dear friends of CDF,

This past year was a tumultuous one for our country, a difficult one for children and an important one for the Children’s Defense Fund. For the first time in our decades-long history, CDF is undergoing a leadership transition. Through and beyond this transition, we will remain vigorous advocates for the lives and well-being of children. Our work will continue to be informed by our history and our roots in the Civil Rights movement; our guiding principle of servant leadership; and above all, by our commitment to providing a strong, effective, and independent voice for all the children of America. And as we look ahead to CDF’s future, Marian Wright Edelman continues to be an essential moral compass for the organization.

In many ways, 2018 was an especially challenging year for America’s children. Nearly 13 million children still live in poverty in the U.S., facing hunger, homelessness, and hopelessness. Mass shootings like the tragedy in Parkland, FL reminded us that we still haven’t taken steps to protect children from the daily scourge of gun violence; and we learned that because of our failure to act, fear of a school shooting is the second-most common worry among our children. At our border, thousands of children were separated from their parents, many of whom are being held in indefinite detention and we now know may never be reunited with their families.

But last year also brought victories for children—what our Founder often calls “rainbows in the clouds.” We successfully advocated for the February 2018 passage of the Families First Prevention Services Act, a law that strengthens families so more children can remain safely with their parents and avoid unnecessary placements in foster care. We defended against threats to federal programs that millions of children and families depend on to be able to see the doctor and access nutritious food. More than 12,000 young scholars attended CDF Freedom Schools® where we fostered their love of reading and belief in their own ability to make a difference. We equipped 150 exceptional young people with financial support, college preparation, and mentoring through our Beat the Odds® program. We convened 450 community and faith leaders at Haley Farm for our annual Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry.

Looking to the year ahead, the Children’s Defense Fund is in a strong position to continue our relentless pursuit of equity, justice and opportunity for children. We enter 2019 having taken important steps forward to ensure the long-term financial health of CDF and, most importantly, have a strong, dedicated team in our national office and across the country working tirelessly toward our mission. With this strong foundation and with our mission to Leave No Child Behind at the core of everything we do, I am confident that we can and will keep improving the odds for all America’s children.

With gratitude,

Max Lesko
National Executive Director
12K children spent nearly 2.5 million hours learning and growing in Freedom Schools.

13,100 school years’ worth of reading gains achieved.

9 in 10 parents/caregivers said they planned to be more engaged in their children’s school work next year.

150 exceptional high school students received financial support, college preparation, and mentoring through our Beat the Odds® program.

$210K in college scholarships were granted to Beat the Odds® honorees.

2,700 children cast their ballots for the issues that matter most to them during our Children’s Vote 2018 campaign.

450 community leaders gathered at Haley Farm for our week-long Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry.

70,980 engaging, enriching, multicultural books provided to Freedom Schools scholars.

1,183 Servant Leader Interns spent nearly 6,000 days training in classroom instruction, civil rights history, and community activism.

1,500+ congregations joined us in celebrating the annual National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths.

223 Child Defender Fellows learned how to lead nonviolent organizing and advocacy efforts as part of our 15-week training.

The Family First Prevention Services Act was successfully passed—which helps vulnerable children stay safely with their families and out of foster care.

$5.8 billion increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, which helps improve the quality of and access to child care.
CDF-TX
Over 1,600 people joined CDF-TX’s ‘Youth Town Call’—a first-of-its-kind virtual town hall for young people to interact with candidates for elected office.

Over 20,000 people participated in the Families Belong Together and Free Rally opposing the separation and detention of families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

CDF-MN
Helped more than 26,400 low-income families through Bridge to Benefits screenings connecting families to work support programs and tax credits.

Co-hosted two non-partisan “Conversations on Children’s Health” with Minnesota’s gubernatorial candidates ahead of the 2018 elections.

CDF-OH
Published 88 county profiles detailing the well-being of children across Ohio through the lens of over 20 indicators.

Advocated for the successful passage of the SAFE Act, which limits out of school suspensions and expulsions for young children and promotes positive behavior intervention services in schools.

CDF-CA
Brought nearly 600 people together for “Building Our Future: A Forum on Children with California’s Gubernatorial Candidates”.

Successfully advocated for the passage of SB 439, which ends the prosecution of children under 12 in delinquency court.

CDF-SRO
Led coalition efforts to defeat changes to undermine Mississippi’s public school funding formula and blocked provisions to divert public school funding to private academies.

Ensured 500 3- and 4-year-old children were ready for kindergarten by providing learning advocacy, parent engagement, and home visitation services to their families.

CDF-NY
Secured an $8 million annual investment that will help expand restorative justice pilot programs across New York City.

Raised the voices of students by preparing them to testify at a New York City Council hearing, resulting in millions of dollars of funding to hire more guidance counselors in high-need schools.

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The financial information presented below reflects post-audit financials for Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) in 2018. CDF saw overwhelmingly positive financial results in 2018 while making the transition to a new financial calendar that begins on October 1. The information below reflects income and expenses starting January 1 through September 30, 2018.

In 2018, eighty-two cents of every dollar was spent on program services with fundraising and administration costing eighteen cents.

Fiscal year 2018 represents nine months (January – September) rather than twelve months due to a transition to a new fiscal year calendar implemented in 2018.

We are so grateful that the number of donations to CDF increased by more than six percent (6%) in 2018 compared to 2017. CDF is committed to being an effective and efficient steward of every gift we receive, and to apply each gift to improve the odds for all of America’s children.

**Total income:** $32,132,992

**Program expenses**
- Leadership development and state and community capacity building: $9,047,370
- Policy and program development and implementation: $4,430,498
- Public education, media campaigns, internet outreach and publications: $466,336

**Total Program Services**
- Fundraising expenses: $1,064,791
- Administrative expenses: $2,023,156

Ending net assets: $27,493,568

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<tr>
<th>Revenue Source</th>
<th>% of Total Revenue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Gains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions (Individuals, Orgs and Services)</td>
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<td>Foundations and Corporations</td>
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<td>Program Fees</td>
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