



Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty Now:

**An Interfaith Advocacy Resource for the
2019 Children's Sabbath and Throughout the Year**



**children's
defense fund**
Leave No Child Behind®

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Introduction

CDF prepared “Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty Now: An Interfaith Advocacy Resource” to be used in conjunction with our End Child Poverty Now report released in April 2019. The policy changes and urgent call to action in CDF’s report demand immediate and on-going advocacy! The original version of the toolkit can be accessed on CDF’s website at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/faith-based/faith-based-resources/>.

This version of the resource, “Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty Now: An Interfaith Advocacy Resource for the Children’s Sabbath and Throughout the Year” is especially intended for those who are planning to engage their place of worship in the 2019 National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths weekend October 18-20 (although some will celebrate on alternate dates). The National of Observance of Children’s Sabbaths is celebrated by places of worship across religious traditions all around the country. Most celebrate in their own place of worship, while others come together in shared, multi-faith services and events. The Children’s Sabbath aims to engage all ages to:

- focus attention on the urgent problems facing children and families—in 2019 the focus is ending child poverty;
- deepen reflection on the teachings, texts, and traditions in each religion that call us to respond with care and work for justice; and
- inspire and equip all ages to respond on the weekend and throughout the year to improve the lives of children and families through raising awareness, reaching out with care, and advocating for justice.

On the Children’s Sabbath, places of worship include:

- a special focus on children and justice in their services or prayers;
- special educational discussions and classes;
- opportunities to take action through direct service and advocacy; and
- plans to use the inspiration and information of the Children’s Sabbath to start or sustain long-term action for justice.

Resources for Your Children’s Sabbath:

On the Children’s Sabbath section of CDF’s website <https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/faith-based/childrens-sabbath-celebration/> you will find Children’s Sabbath resources that can be used year after year:

- Welcome to the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths
- Planning Suggestions for All Faiths; Action Ideas for All Faiths
- Resources for Multi-Faith Children’s Sabbaths
- Resources for Christian Worship on Children’s Sabbath
- Resources for Jewish Services on Children’s Shabbat

On our website you will also find resources prepared especially for the 2019 Children's Sabbath, "Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty Now" including a letter from CDF founder Marian Wright Edelman, a sample 2019 multi-faith Children's Sabbath Service; Christian, Jewish, and other worship resources specific to the 2019 theme, a reproducible 2019 Seven-Day Guide for Prayer and Reflection, and more.

This Uniting Hearts and Voices interfaith toolkit provides many of the 2019 Children's Sabbath resources: a Curriculum & Guide for an Interfaith Session on Ending Child Poverty Now that may be used with adults or adults and older youth from one place of worship or many for the educational component of your Children's Sabbath. For the actions on the 2019 Children's Sabbath weekend and in the year that follows, draw from Suggested Actions for the Children's Sabbath Weekend and Beyond; Forty Ways to Serve with Care; and Connecting with Congress: Resources for Writing, Calling and Visiting Your Legislators. Before, on, and after the Children's Sabbath weekend you can distribute the three bulletin inserts provided here. And social media tools—included in the last section—can be shared to raise awareness before, during, and after your Children's Sabbath.

We hope you will use all of these resources to plan a Children's Sabbath weekend and take action throughout the year ahead. Together, people of faith and places of worship across our nation must unite our hearts and voices to end child poverty now.



1. Curriculum & Guide for an Interfaith Session on *Ending Child Poverty Now*

The following resources are designed to help places of worship plan and lead a session on child poverty with adults and youth from one faith tradition or multiple.

To help faith communities study and act on CDF's [Ending Child Poverty Now](#) report, this user-friendly curriculum includes:

- Facilitation Guide: How to Plan and Lead This Session
- Suggested Session Outline
- Session Handouts

Facilitation Guide: How to Plan and Lead This Session

- 1. Review the following materials.** Read the materials and handouts to familiarize yourself with the flow and content. You are encouraged to read CDF's entire report, [*Ending Child Poverty Now*](#). Do not feel that you need to become an “expert,” however. This session is intended to be a starting point—a conversation to inform, raise awareness and inspire action. Your role is to facilitate an open and respectful discussion, not to have all the answers.
- 2. Decide who will be invited to attend.** Decide if the session will be offered to a group from your place of worship (such as a youth group or adult education class), if you will invite one or more places of worship to join you for a joint session, or if you will open the session up to the community for a multi-faith session. Then, schedule the date, time, and location accordingly.
- 3. Invite co-facilitators or guest speakers as desired.** One person can facilitate this session. If you are planning a multi-faith discussion, however, it is best to include a representative from each faith tradition you expect to be represented in the room. Co-facilitators should discuss the session in advance, make any desired adjustments to the program and materials, and share in the leadership of the session. There are also multiple opportunities to include guest speakers in the session, so consider inviting community members to share their stories and expertise.
- 4. Promote the session to build turn-out.** Include an announcement in your place of worship's bulletin, newsletter, or website. If the session will be open to the community, send an announcement to local newspapers or community newsletters.
- 5. Gather the necessary equipment and materials.** This session requires the following materials: index cards; pencils/pens; flipchart paper; and markers. If you choose to show the optional video suggested in section 4 of the session outline, make sure all audio and visual equipment is set up in advance.
- 6. Prepare handouts.** Make copies of the following handouts based on the anticipated number of participants. Handout 1 is Marian Wright Edelman's Foreword to *Ending Child Poverty Now*. Handout 2 is Opening Our Hearts, Hearing their Voices – Stories of Child Poverty. Handout 3 is CDF's *Ending Child Poverty Now Brief*. Handout 4 is “A Prayer to End Child Poverty in Our Time.”
- 7. Secure necessary permission and support for follow-up.** Ahead of time, talk with the leadership or appropriate committees for your place of worship to have a preliminary conversation about how your place of worship could support follow-up action after the session. Secure any formal or informal permission or support needed to take action following the session.
- 8. Plan for follow-up action.** Prepare for the final section of the session when participants are asked to consider ways to help end child poverty. Identify action steps participants can take in your community or opportunities to serve at your place of worship.

Suggested Session Outline

This session is designed to take two hours, but some sections can be omitted or shortened if necessary. To keep the session under 90 minutes, consider cutting sections 2 and 5. You may also consider splitting the session into two one-hour sessions.

1. Welcome (10 minutes)

- Welcome participants to the session and introduce yourself.
- For groups smaller than 10, have participants introduce themselves to the whole group. For groups larger than 10, have participants introduce themselves to someone next to them. Invite participants to share their name, a word or phrase to describe how they feel about child poverty, and one thing they hope to get out of the session. Ask participants to keep their introductions brief.
- Introduce the purpose of the session and the agenda.

2. Vision and Values (10 minutes)

- Distribute two index cards to each participant. On the first card, ask participants to write their vision of an America without child poverty. How would it be different? How will the end of child poverty have changed things? On the second card, ask them to write something from their faith tradition or personal value system that informs their view of poverty and their role in ending it. Is there a text, teaching, or understanding that most powerfully guides their perspective on ending child poverty? Allow five minutes for this.
- Have participants share what they have written in small groups or as a whole group. Emphasize that this is not a time for debate or discussion, but a time to listen and be heard.

3. Child Poverty: “A National Moral Disgrace” (10 minutes)

- Ask participants to turn to Marian Wright Edelman’s Foreword to *Ending Child Poverty Now* (Handout 1). Ask for a volunteer or volunteers to read it aloud as participants silently read along in their own copies of the foreword. Before the reading starts, invite participants to mark up their own copies of the foreword as they listen: put an exclamation mark by anything that surprises them, a question mark by anything they want to learn more about or consider further, and a star by what is most powerful or persuasive to them.
- Allow participants to share their reactions.

4. Poverty Hurts Children (20 minutes)

- Put a face on it. If your place of worship has capacity to show a downloaded or streamed video, play the following video featuring the voices of children in poverty (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLrTZ5IG_Eg). If not, ask participants to read one of the stories or articles about children and families struggling to make ends meet (see Handout 2). You may also consider inviting someone who has experienced poverty firsthand to share their experiences.

- Invite participants to name some of the ways they think poverty hurts children. Jot down the ideas on flipchart paper as they are named.
- Ask for a volunteer to read “The Harms of Poverty Can Last a Lifetime” on page 2 of CDF’s *Ending Child Poverty Now Brief* (Handout 3). Add any new facts to the list that was created.
- Ask participants to look at the list and identify how poverty’s harm to children—which is reason enough to end it—additionally harms our nation’s future.

5. Compassion and Justice: Why Direct Service and Policy Changes Are Both Needed (15 minutes)

- People of faith and places of worship have a long history of providing services directly to children and families facing economic hardship and other crises. Such personal, loving, compassionate service is for many a faith imperative and personal calling. Working for policy changes to advance justice and structural reform may not be initially or easily embraced by all. Invite a discussion of why “both/and” rather than “either/or” is a necessary response. Why are we called both to serve with compassion and seek justice with passion? What can policy change do that direct service cannot? What can direct service do that policy change cannot? What tends to hold us back from providing direct services to families in need? What tends to hold us back from seeking justice and policy reform?

6. Delving Deeper: Understanding the Policy Changes that Could Reduce Child Poverty Right Now (20 minutes)

- Ask participants to turn to the back cover of the *Ending Child Poverty Now Brief* (Handout 3) and review CDF’s nine proposed policy improvements to cut child poverty 57 percent. Give participants ten minutes to read and discuss the policy proposals as a group.
- After ten minutes, ask participants to identify one or two policy changes that resonate most with them and reflect the needs in their community. Which policy change(s) would they prioritize? Why?
- Alternatively, invite an outside speaker to talk to the group for about 20 minutes, explaining the proposed policy changes and how they would positively impact children and their families.

7. What Can We Do? (30 minutes)

- Invite participants to re-read their index cards with their visions for a nation without child poverty and the faith/value statements that guide or inspire them.
- Open a discussion of what participants think they could do—as individuals, as a group, or as an entire place of worship—to promote these policy changes to end child poverty now. Jot down ideas on two sheets of flip chart paper—one for individual actions, one for collective actions. Ask participants to outline how these ideas will be pursued, identify next steps, and make plans for future communication and coordination.
- Share the list of suggested actions included along with this toolkit.

- Collect names of any participants who are interested in scheduling a visit with their members of Congress when they are back in their Congressional District (not in Washington). This group should meet again to plan for the visit—defining message, assigning and practicing parts, calling for an appointment, and so forth. More information about how to plan a visit is on page 35.

8. Closing (5 minutes)

- If appropriate for your tradition, close in prayer. Consider using “A Prayer to End Child Poverty in Our Time” by Marian Wright Edelman (Handout 4).
- *Optional:* Gather the “Vision” and “Values” index cards participants completed earlier in the session and display them in your buildings to inspire and remind your faith community of their commitments. Alternatively, encourage participants to take home their cards and post them as a personal reminder of the vision and values they committed to working toward.



Handout 1: Marian Wright Edelman's Foreword to *Ending Child Poverty Now*

It is a moral disgrace and profound economic threat that nearly 1 in 5 children are poor in the wealthiest nation on earth. 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. There is no excuse for allowing needless child suffering in our land of tremendous affluence. It is wrong. And it is economically and socially dangerous.

Make no mistake—our nation's economic system and priorities are consciously sacrificing our children. Poverty drains child bodies and spirits. Inadequate nutrition, untreated illnesses, uncorrected vision problems and lead poisoning all sap children's health and energy for learning. Unsafe child care, inferior schools and dangerous neighborhoods kill ambition, self-confidence and hope. Untold human potential is lost when children fall behind in school, drop out or get caught in the criminal justice system. Every year we leave millions of children in poverty costs our nation about \$700 billion in lost productivity and increased health and crime costs. Acting to eliminate the terrible human and economic waste of child poverty and the blight on our nation's soul is our urgent task and opportunity.

We can end child poverty if we choose to fight rather than ignore it. We have the money. We have the power. We have the know-how. All of us have the moral, social and economic responsibility. But we lack the will and sense of injustice of enough faith, political, women, parent and media leaders to pierce the profound indifference to preventable and solvable child suffering; the poisonous politics of self-interest and greed; cruel ideological agendas which believe government should help the rich and powerful most and the poor and powerless least or not at all; and the political hypocrisy of leaders across all levels of government and parties who leave millions of children behind while pretending to do otherwise.

Something is awry in our nation when just three of the richest men in America hold more of our nation's wealth than the bottom half of our population of 323 million people; when the members of the Forbes 400 own more wealth than the bottom 64 percent of our nation combined; when the highest paid American CEO took home over \$103 million in 2017, more than the combined average annual salaries of 4,360 child care workers or 1,805 elementary school teachers; and when the gap between rich and poor has widened to an historic level not seen since the 1920s. These and other wealthy Americans did not need the \$1.9 trillion tax cut the Trump administration and Congress gave them while there are still hungry, homeless, poor, uninsured and poorly educated children in our nation and countless other Americans struggling to make ends meet.

It is way past time for more just national choices to close the gap between our professed principles of equal justice and opportunity. We must change direction, recover a sense of urgency about saving our children, redefine the measure of American success and make sure principles of justice rather than power, money and militarism guide our feet and national priorities. Babies' survival needs should be met before individual and corporate greed.

Many years ago, a clergywoman and dear friend told me she took her car to the Jiffy Lube for service. While waiting, she looked for something to read. Her choices were Field and Stream, Popular Mechanics and a small manual for boaters. When she began thumbing through the manual, she came to a section titled “The Rules of the Open Seas” which described two kinds of vessels—burdened boats and privileged boats. Burdened boats are like row boats or sail boats. They have no power and are at the mercy of the tide, wind and human effort. Privileged boats have motors and the power to go where they want when they want. When a privileged and burdened boat meet on the open seas, the rule says the privileged boat must give way so that the burdened boat can make it to safe harbor. More than 12.8 million poor children have been left adrift in small boats without survival gear—all to pad the pockets of the privileged and powerful. The rule of the open seas must become our national moral commitment, public policy and funded practice for every child in America.

This report calls for an end to child poverty for all children and shows how we can get started now with a 57 percent reduction immediately. If our leaders could find the courage to increase investments in existing policies and programs that work, we could shrink child poverty 57 percent, Black child poverty 65 percent and improve economic circumstances for 95 percent of all poor children at a cost of \$52 billion a year. Our nation can afford it. There are many ways to pay for this down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty including:

- Taxing the accumulated wealth of the top 0.1 percent of Americans at a rate of 0.25 percent each year; or
- Restoring the top individual tax rate to 39.6 percent and raising the corporate tax rate from 21 to 25 percent; or
- Eliminating tax breaks for the wealthy by taxing capital gains and dividends at the same rates as wages, saving \$130 billion a year; or
- Decreasing 10 percent of our nation’s FY2019 \$686 billion military budget.

Investments in our most vulnerable children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive military spending.

If we love America and love our children, you and I must build a powerful movement to end child poverty and transform the political and economic priorities in a nation that has ignored the cries of millions of poor children to stack the decks in favor of a few exceedingly rich and powerful billionaires and millionaires. We must envision and realize an America where every child has enough—enough time, attention and stability from parents and other caring adults; and enough quality education, healthy food, stable shelter, accessible health care and other basics we who are more privileged want for our own children. God did not make two classes of children and we do so at our peril. Let us keep our eyes on what children need to grow up healthy and contributing human beings. We must never allow ourselves to be sidetracked by shifting political winds or deterred by the endless stream of excuses attempting to justify indifference to and neglect of children. The great undertaking of saving our children will save America’s soul and future in a world desperately in need of moral, political and economic leadership.



Marian Wright Edelman

Handout 2: Opening Our Hearts, Hearing their Voices – Stories of Child Poverty



No Place to Call Home

“We slept in the car. We had to, because we had no home. I slept in the back seat. My sister laid in the front. My mom laid in the front. Her head was back. My sister’s head was on the side. I laid flat...We went to IHOP and we only got one pancake and we shared it. That was our breakfast.” – Jasmine, age 7

Life is Harder

“My dad did not have enough money to buy his car license. So the cop took his car away. He can’t drive anymore. Now it is harder for him to get to work, and sometimes he is late. So he does not get as much money as he used to get. Now we have to go walking everywhere. We get tired. Our life is harder. We can’t get as much food. Sometimes my mom has only beans, and I don’t like beans so I just don’t eat. Sometimes I get hungry. It’s harder for me to go to sleep and I’m tired in the morning.

When I grow up, I was thinking to be a doctor. But now I think that I won’t be able to do anything, because I won’t even have food or shelter.” – Alan, age 10

Wow, We Get Cereal!

Shoes told the story of the McKee family’s descent into poverty. Those of Skyler, 10, and Zachary, 12, were falling apart—tops flapping loose above the worn remnants of soles from which they have largely detached. Their sister, Jordan, 14, wore the varsity coach’s shoes when she played volleyball at school.

Less visible was hunger. The children and their parents, Tonya and Ed McKee, of Dowagiac, Michigan, sometimes went without food when Ed’s unemployment insurance ran out and the family was not yet receiving food stamps. Skyler said he gave the birthday money he got at church to his mom for groceries “and I told her she didn’t have to pay me back.” Skyler confided that sometimes his stomach growled. “It’s hard, not easy like it was before where we had money and could do stuff. Now we don’t go anywhere... Sometimes we don’t have food and we just don’t eat.”

Their mother Tonya shared, “Ed and I went hungry some nights so we could feed the kids. A lady here in town has brought us food several times and went shopping for us several times. And our parents helped when they could. Otherwise, we didn’t know where the next meal would come from. One of my friends brought over some cereal and milk one day and the boys said, ‘Wow! We get cereal!’”

Going Hungry in a Nation of Plenty

What does it mean to be food insecure or, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture phrases it, to not have “adequate food for active, healthy living?” For too many families, food insecurity means tough calls about who will and will not eat. For Jeannette’s family, it meant sacrifice. Her parents struggled to afford regular nutritious meals. When resources were limited, they chose to go without so Jeannette would have enough to eat.

Food insecurity means stress and worry over where the next meal will come from. It drove Florencia to keep her eyes peeled for loose change. Nickels and dimes could add up to a bag of chips from the corner store—something for her little brother to eat.

Food insecurity can also mean physical pain, stomach pangs and gnawing hunger. For Eva and her sisters, it meant drinking big glasses of water to feel full on nights when there was no dinner. No child should go to bed with only water to fill her stomach.

An extensive body of research has spoken: Food insecurity threatens children’s health, ability to learn and path to adulthood.¹³ Lawmakers must invest in policy solutions proven to address child hunger, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP helped combat food insecurity among more than 18 million children in 2017—a quarter of our nation’s children.

“I have faith. But I also have politics.”

In 2014, eight-year-old Alexander lived with two older siblings and his mom in a single-room apartment. Alexander’s family valued time together, but this time came at a price. So savvy Alexander started saving money. “I want to buy one hour of your time,” Alexander told big brother Julio, who was then 24 and working up to 16-hours a day at two full-time jobs. “How much for one hour to play with me?” Julio wept at Alexander’s question. And he prayed. And then he became active in a local Fight for \$15 campaign to raise the minimum wage in Emeryville, CA. “God, he believes in justice,” he said. “I have faith. But I also have politics.” There were marches, strikes and a big victory: city council members voted in 2015 to increase the minimum wage. The subsequent bump in Julio’s pay changed his life—and Alexander’s. Julio could afford to work less and spend more time with his little brother. Now, he often picks up Alexander from school. Sociologist and writer Matthew Desmond shared Julio’s story and the stories of other low-wage workers in a New York Times Magazine article. A common theme in the workers’ experiences? Higher wages translated to improved financial security, improved health and improved lives. And research confirmed that children receive some of the biggest benefits of an increased minimum wage—declines in rates of low birth-weight babies, infant mortality, teen births and teen alcohol consumption have all been linked to higher minimum wages.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Baby dolls, tiny trucks, toy food and dress-up capes. Scattered about the ballroom of a motel in Northeast Washington, D.C., and captured in a Washington Post column by Petula Dvorak, these hallmarks of child's play are not merely a sign of productive imaginations—they're evidence of a larger poverty crisis.

Twenty minutes outside the city's downtown, a stretch of budget motels along a major highway serve as overflow shelters for homeless families in our nation's capital. They have strict rules about where children are seen and heard. Signs dotting the hallways announce "No Playing on the Hotel Premises" and children are forbidden from gathering in common spaces. The Homeless Children's Playtime Project, a local nonprofit, reserves event spaces to carve out areas where children can be children, but the lack of space and high cost of reserving ballrooms and conference halls means pop-up playtimes are limited.

Away from the hustle and bustle of Capitol Hill where big deals are made and bills become laws, the motels—and the 1,000 homeless children within them—are largely out of sight and out of mind. Other shelters are similarly isolated. Until it closed in October 2018, the city's largest family shelter was D.C. General, a former abandoned public hospital whose neighboring buildings included a jail and morgue. Out of direct view and tucked into the nooks and crannies of a dense city, it is too easy to overlook homeless children.

Until tragedy strikes.

Eight-year-old Relisha Rudd was abducted from D.C. General in March 2014. For months, Relisha's disappearance dominated the news cycle and brought national attention to D.C. General. City officials, pundits, locals and anonymous online commenters heaped blame on Relisha's family, her teachers and her social workers. But assigning blame did nothing to bring Relisha—who loved art and baby dolls and would exuberantly spell V-I-C-T-O-R-Y on her school's cheer team—home. Five years have passed and Relisha is still gone.

Why do we fail to see our poor children until their faces stare at us from a Missing Child poster? Why do we blame parents rather than challenge our broken, unjust system? Other Relishas live everywhere among us: homeless because housing is too expensive and jobs pay too little; unaccounted for because affordable quality child care is out of reach; finding pockets of playtime in motel ballrooms because play is otherwise forbidden; hurting because poverty hurts.

It's time to stop assigning blame and start taking action. We must make poor children's struggles visible to policymakers at all levels of government and lift up evidence-backed poverty solutions including a higher minimum wage, transitional jobs programs, child care assistance and housing vouchers for struggling parents. We must keep children front and center, invisible no longer.

ENDING CHILD POVERTY NOW



IT'S TIME TO END CHILD POVERTY

Growing up poor can have lifelong consequences. Poverty decreases a child's chances of graduating from high school and increases her chances of becoming a poor adult. It increases the likelihood she will suffer illnesses and get caught in the criminal justice system.

Nearly 13 million children in America live in poverty and face these harsh realities every day. Their suffering is not an inevitability, it is a direct result of the moral, economic and political choices we make as a nation. We are failing these children. It's time for us to choose a new path, one that gives every child the chance to grow up free from poverty.

We can do better—it's easier and more affordable than you think.

INVESTING IN PROVEN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS CAN CUT CHILD POVERTY 57 PERCENT

We can lift **5.5 million children out of poverty** and improve the well-being of tens of millions more by investing in programs and policies already proven to work. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) contracted with the Urban Institute to study the impact of expanding and investing in proven approaches to increase employment, make work pay and meet children's basic needs. For more detail on these policies, see the back of this brief.

Together, CDF's proposed policy improvements would:

- Reduce child poverty **57.1 percent**, lifting 5.5 million children above the poverty line.
- Cut extreme child poverty **57.9 percent**, lifting 1.3 million children above half the poverty line.
- Raise family incomes for **95 percent of poor children** and improve economic circumstances for 57 percent of all children in America—42.3 million children in total.
- Cost **\$52 billion**—just 1.4 percent of the federal budget and a fraction of the \$1.9 trillion total cost of the tax cut Congress gave to the nation's wealthiest individuals and corporations in 2017.
- Direct **100 percent** of the new government spending for these improvements to families with children below 150 percent of the poverty line.

We can easily afford these investments, which would improve the odds for millions of children and help recover much of the nearly \$700 billion our national economy loses each year due to child poverty's effects on productivity, public health and crime.

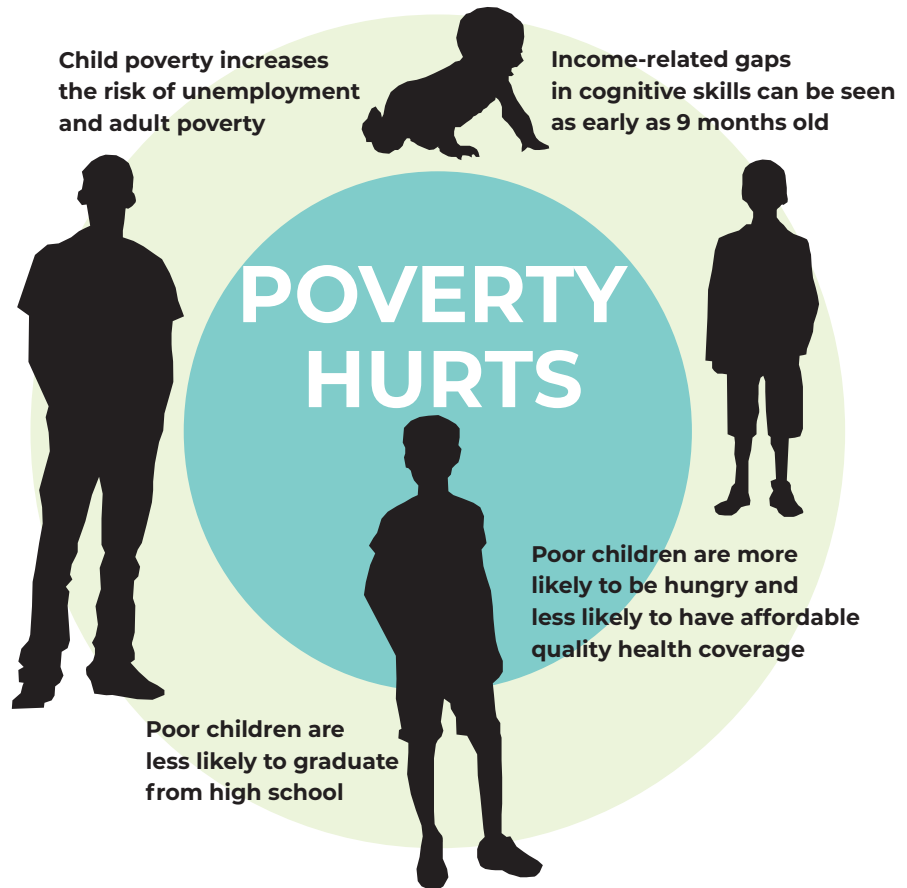


We are failing America's children.

A baby sleeping in a car alongside his mom and 5-year-old brother after their landlord evicted them. A 6-year-old enrolling in her fourth school in a year because she's had to move from one relative's couch to another. A 10-year-old going hungry on weekends because school breakfast and lunch aren't available. A 14-year-old sitting out the football season because the lack of nutritious food options in his neighborhood left him unable to play due to high blood pressure. A 16-year-old dropping out of high school because he has to work and support his mother and siblings. These are the faces of child poverty. These are the children we are failing every day across our country.

THE HARMS OF POVERTY CAN LAST A LIFETIME

Experiencing poverty in childhood can have lifelong consequences. Poverty places children at risk of hunger and homelessness. It can impair cognitive, emotional, social and physical development from the earliest years. It increases the risk of developmental delays, poor school performance and behavioral issues. Poor children often are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be unemployed, earn less as adults and become involved in the criminal justice system. Poverty also can compromise children's physical health, increasing risk for asthma, obesity, diabetes and a host of other health complications.



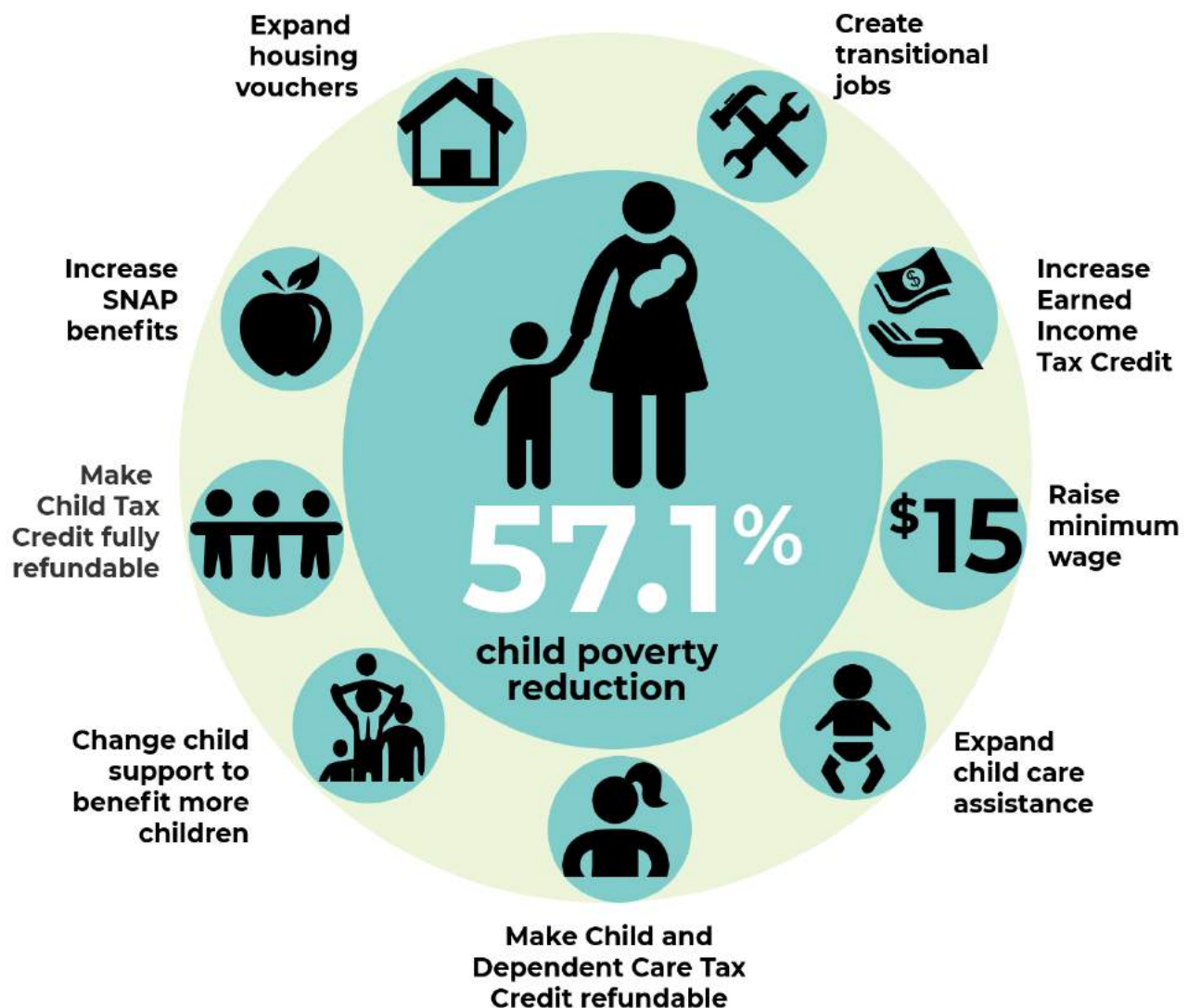
AMERICA PROSPERS WHEN CHILDREN THRIVE

We all benefit when children have what they need to learn and grow and we all hurt when children hurt. Investments in supports like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program improve birth outcomes, health, test scores, graduation rates, college attendance and adult earnings. Child poverty also hurts our economic stability and costs nearly \$700 billion a year in lost productivity and extra health and crime costs. Every dollar invested in reducing child poverty will return at least seven dollars to our economy. We know what works to lift children out of poverty. We can't afford to wait.

Lifting 5.5 million children out of poverty is within our reach.

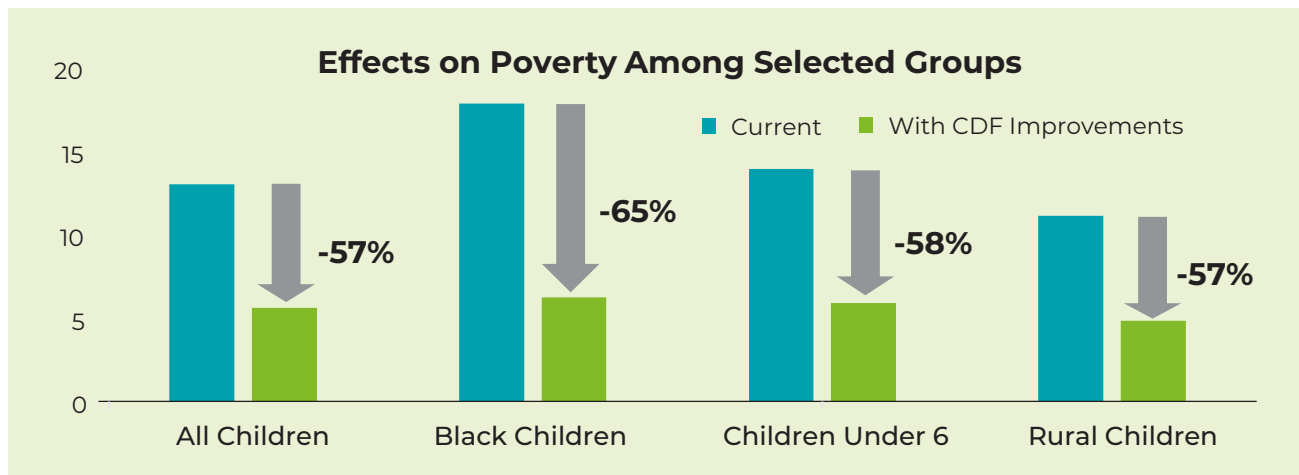
If our nation invested an additional 1.4 percent of the federal budget in policies proven to boost employment, make work pay and meet children's basic needs, **we could cut child poverty now at least 57 percent, lifting 5.5 million children above the poverty line and helping 95 percent of poor children.**

HOW TO LIFT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN OUT OF POVERTY NOW



The youngest children and children of color would benefit the most.

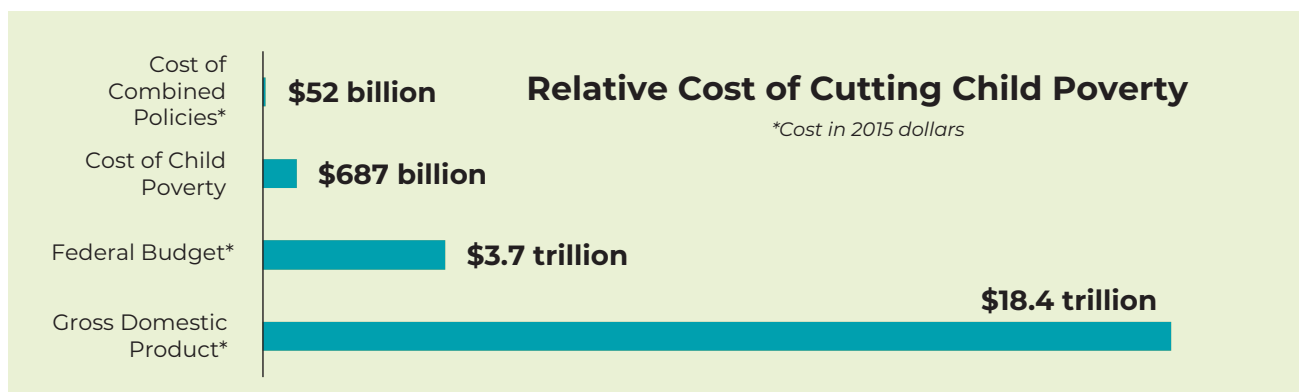
In 2017, nearly 1 in 5 children in America were poor and the youngest children were the poorest. More than 2 in 3 poor children were children of color. These policy improvements would reach these children, reducing young child poverty nearly 60 percent, Black child poverty 65 percent and Hispanic child poverty 59 percent.



We can easily afford this investment.

These combined policy changes would cost \$52.3 billion for one year. To pay for this investment we could:

- Unwind part of the 2017 tax bill that gives almost \$2 trillion over the next decade to the country's wealthiest individuals and corporations by restoring the top individual tax rate to 39.6 percent and increasing the corporate tax rate to 25 percent, saving **\$50 billion**.
- Fight income inequality by taxing the net worth of the super-wealthy at a rate of 0.1 percent and closing the "trust-fund loophole" that forgives taxes on inherited investments. Together these changes would raise about **\$60 billion** per year.
- Scale back American militarism by cutting military spending by 10 percent to save about **\$52 billion** annually.



We need your voice.

Congress can and must immediately advance this package of policies to help millions of today's children escape poverty. For our lawmakers to act, they need to hear from parents and grandparents, advocates, students, teachers and child care workers, doctors and nurses, faith leaders and everyone in America who understands we cannot wait to chart a path out of poverty for our children.

Join the movement to end child poverty now.

- **Read more.** Go to www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now to read CDF's full *Ending Child Poverty Now* report and familiarize yourself with the facts.
- **Spread the word.** The evidence is clear. We already know how to reduce child poverty—put more people to work, make work pay and meet children's basic needs. We now need to build the will and demand that elected leaders strategically invest more in what already works.
- **Urge elected leaders in Washington, D.C. and at all levels of government to make the changes proposed to cut child poverty 57 percent.** Don't forget state and local officials. A number of these policies and programs have state and local counterparts. For more details on your state policies, see Appendix 1 of CDF's full report.
- **Don't let others tell you the country can't afford to end child poverty.** Closing tax loopholes for the rich would pay for these improvements without raising the deficit. Investing in these improvements would also reduce the nearly \$700 billion dollars we lose each year because of child poverty. Not only can we afford to end child poverty, we can't afford *not* to end child poverty.



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.

Together, these policy changes can cut child poverty 57 percent now.

Increasing Employment and Making Work Pay

The best antidote to poverty is a good job that pays enough to support a family. We must increase employment among families with children and raise incomes so they can work their way out of poverty.

- **Provide transitional jobs for families with children** – Publicly funded transitional jobs are effective for providing income and building skills among the unemployed and underemployed. We propose extending 30-week job opportunities to people aged 16-64 in families with children who are currently unemployed or underemployed.
- **Raise the hourly minimum wage to \$15.00 by 2024** – A parent with two children working full time at the current federal minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour) earns \$4,669 below the poverty level. More than a third of poor children in America live with an adult who works full-time year-round. No family working full time at the minimum wage should live in poverty. We would raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.
- **Increase the EITC for the lowest income families with children** – The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable tax credit that rewards work for low-income working families, is one of the nation's most effective tools for reducing child poverty, keeping about 3 million children out of poverty in 2016. We would boost the credit by about 30 percent.
- **Make the CTC fully refundable and increase its value for those with young children** – The Child Tax Credit (CTC) as amended in 2017 provides families up to \$2,000 for each child under 17 to help offset the costs of raising a child. However, because the credit is not fully refundable, the poorest families who need it most cannot receive the full amount of the credit. We would make the credit fully refundable with the first dollar of earnings, and increase the phase-in rate for young children.
- **Expand child care assistance to all families below 150 percent of poverty with no copays** – To work, parents need access to affordable high-quality child care. To assist low-income families with child care costs, the federal government and states provide child care subsidies to families with children under age 13. Because of limited funding, fewer than 1 in 5 eligible children benefit from child care subsidies.
- **Make the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit refundable and increase its value** – The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) is a nonrefundable tax credit that reimburses families for a portion of their child or dependent care expenses. Making it refundable will help families with low earnings and no tax liability benefit from it.

Meeting Children's Basic Needs

Child poverty can harm children for life. We must strengthen existing programs and policies that help meet children's basic needs when families fall on hard times.

- **Increase SNAP benefits by about 31 percent** – The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped combat hunger among 19.2 million children in fiscal year 2016—over a quarter of all children in the nation—and kept 1.5 million children out of poverty in 2017. However, at \$1.40 per person per meal, SNAP benefits can't ensure children don't go hungry. Using the Low Cost Food Plan, not the Thrifty Food Plan, as the basis for benefits will help more families put food on the table.
- **Expand housing vouchers for severely rent-burdened families below 150 percent of poverty** – Housing is the single largest expense for most families and is growing increasingly out of reach. Due to funding limitations, fewer than 1 in 4 eligible families with children receives federal housing assistance.
- **Change treatment of child support to benefit more families receiving TANF and SNAP** – For families who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the state collects child support from non-custodial parents and uses most of it to reimburse the cost of assistance. Passing-through to families all child support collected by families receiving TANF, not counting that child support income in the calculation of TANF benefits, and not counting up to \$100 of it for SNAP benefit calculations will help reduce child poverty.

Handout 4: A Prayer to End Child Poverty in Our Time

by Marian Wright Edelman



God help us to end poverty in our time.

The poverty of having a child with too little to eat and no place to sleep, no air, sunlight and space to breathe, bask, and grow.

The poverty of watching your child suffer hunger or get sicker and sicker and not knowing what to do or how to get help because you don't have another dime or a car, money, or health insurance.

The poverty of working your fingers to the bone every day taking care of somebody else's children and neglecting your own, and still not being able to pay your bills.

The poverty of having a job which does not let you afford a stable place to live and being terrified you'll become homeless and lose your children to foster care.

The poverty of losing your job, running out of unemployment benefits, and having no other help in sight.

The poverty of working all your life caring for your own children and having to start all over again caring for the grandchildren you love.

The poverty of earning a college degree, having children, opening a day care center, and taking home \$300 a week—or a month—if you're lucky.

The poverty of loneliness and isolation and alienation—having no one to call or visit, tell you where to get help, assist you in getting it, or care if you're living or dead.

The poverty of having too much and sharing too little and having the burden of nothing to carry.

The poverty of convenient blindness and deafness and indifference to others.

The poverty of low aim and paltry purpose, of weak will and tiny vision, of big meetings and small actions, of loud talk and sullen grudging service.

The poverty of believing in nothing, standing for nothing, sharing nothing, sacrificing nothing, struggling with others for nothing.

The poverty of pride and ingratitude for God's gifts of life and children and family and freedom and home and country and not wanting for others what you want for yourself.

The poverty of greed for more and more and more, ignoring, blaming, and exploiting the needy, and taking from the weak to please the strong.

The poverty of addiction to more and more things, drugs, drink, work, self, violence, power, fleeting fame, and an unjust status quo.

The poverty of fear which keeps you from doing the thing you think is right.

The poverty of convenient ignorance about the needs of those around you and of despair and cynicism.

God help us end poverty in our time, in all its faces and places, young and old, rural, urban, suburban and small town too, and in every color of humans You have made everywhere.

God help us to end poverty in our time in all its guises—inside and out—physical and spiritual, so that all our and Your children may live the lives that you intend.





2. Suggested Faith Actions

Join us in action to end child poverty now!

Use the following list to identify ways you and individuals in your place of worship can make a difference in the lives of children today and in the year to come. Some of these actions can be taken during the Children's Sabbath weekend (October 18-20, 2019), while others can be part of a long-term strategy your place of worship or individuals within it pursue in the year to come.

Join the Movement to End Child Poverty Now

- 1. Connect with your concern and commitment.** As an individual or as a group, in whatever way is most appropriate and helpful for you—whether it is through prayer, meditation, conversation, journaling, or some other way—connect with your own deepest desire to do whatever you can to end child poverty and improve the lives of children, our sacred charge. Identify the role that your religious faith plays in calling you to act on behalf of children and sustaining you when it is challenging. Look honestly at what gets in the way of your making the difference you want to make, whether it's discouragement, feeling busy, not knowing where to start, or something else. Consider your gifts, talents, and resources. Discern what kind of action will be most fulfilling, satisfying, sustainable, and effective. What are you called to do?
- 2. Learn more about child poverty.** Visit the Children's Defense Fund's website, www.childrensdefense.org, for more online resources about child poverty. Look for opportunities to learn from low-income families themselves and from the people who serve them most directly.
- 3. Inform others.** Start a small group or class in your place of worship to find out more and come up with ways to take action to ease and end child poverty. Use the discussion guide in Section 1 to help groups in your place of worship or to join many places of worship in learning more and developing active responses to end child poverty.
- 4. Raise awareness.** After securing appropriate approval from your place of worship, order one of the new End Child Poverty Now banners from CDF's online store <https://cdfwebstore.com/collections/posters/products/copy-of-pre-order-the-banner-to-end-child-poverty-now-in-purple-with-abbreviated-cdf-logo>
<https://cdfwebstore.com/collections/posters/products/pre-order-the-banner-to-end-child-poverty-now-in-blue> to display outside your place of worship on the Children's Sabbath weekend and throughout the year, to remind your members and the public about the need to end child poverty now and your place of worship's commitment to help do so.
- 5. Start a program in your house of worship to fill an unmet need of families in poverty.** There are countless ways that individuals, groups, and entire places of worship can directly serve children and families in poverty. Use the ideas in the Children's Sabbath resource Action Ideas for All Faiths to spark your own thinking and caring action. For example organize trips using your congregation's van to help poor families reach supermarkets where their money can go furthest. Tutor children to help combat educational disadvantage. Make sure your community has a site during the summer that offers the federally funded breakfast and lunch program. The CDF Freedom Schools® program is a summer and after school enrichment program that provides meals through the federally funded breakfast and lunch program. Visit <https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/cdf-freedom-schools/> for more information about supporting or starting a Freedom School site in your community.

- 6. Help connect families in poverty with the programs that work.** People just like you are trained to be volunteer income tax preparers to help low-income families claim the Earned Income Tax Credit they are due. Others are helping spread the word about the available children's health coverage programs available to poor and lower-income families. The Children's Sabbath resource Action Ideas for All Faiths has more ideas and information about how you and your place of worship can help.
- 7. Advocate for change and justice.** The change children need won't come until members of Congress hear a broad, relentless demand from their constituents. Children's needs are easy to ignore because they don't vote or make campaign contributions. Even though our lives are busy, we must make time to work for justice. We don't have a moment or a child to waste. On the Children's Sabbath weekend and throughout the year, your place of worship can be a voice for justice. Draw on the resources in Section 5 of this resource to:
- Start a monthly letter-writing group or have a letter-writing table after services or at another time appropriate for your tradition. Write to your members of Congress and other elected leaders.
 - Write a letter to the editor and send a copy to your elected officials.
 - Make an appointment to visit your representative when she or he is in their district office. Organize a group from your place of worship or from several places of worship to communicate the message that ending child poverty is a moral imperative as well as a practical one.
 - Invite your elected officials to come speak to your house of worship (or a coalition of them) about children's needs. Be prepared with good questions.
- 8. Share stories using CDF's End Child Poverty Now postcards.** Create End Child Poverty Now postcards for the Children's Sabbath weekend – you can print them here <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ECPN-postcards-2019.pdf>. On the Children's Sabbath weekend (or at another time appropriate for your religious tradition), distribute the postcards and invite people to add their own message, name, and address. Collect the postcards and send them to the Children's Defense Fund, Attn: Austin Sowa, at 840 First Street NE, Suite 300, Washington DC 20002. CDF will then deliver them to members of Congress along with postcards from other places of worship to communicate and amplify the united voice of people of faith calling for us to end child poverty now.

END CHILD POVERTY NOW



End Child Poverty Now banner in purple with abbreviated CDF logo

END CHILD POVERTY NOW



End Child Poverty Now in blue with the prayer



3. Bulletin Inserts

The following are three, double-sided bulletin inserts which can be printed, folded in half, and included alongside other worship materials. For each bulletin insert, make two-sided, single-sheet copies with the cover panels on the front and the inside panels on the back. Be sure to print each bulletin insert as it appears here so the inside panels prints right side up.

Distribute these bulletin inserts at your place of worship to raise awareness about child poverty and solutions for tackling it. Encourage members of your congregation to write to policymakers about the need to expand and invest in existing policies and programs to lift millions of children out of poverty.



Let's unite our hearts and voices to end child poverty now!

Congress can and must immediately advance this package of policies to help millions of today's children escape poverty. For our lawmakers to act, they need to hear from parents and grandparents, advocates, teachers, students, doctors, faith leaders and everyone in America who understands we cannot wait to chart a path out of poverty for children.

Ask your members of Congress to make an immediate down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty.

To learn more and send a message, visit www.childrendefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/.



Ending Child Poverty Now: A Policy Agenda for a Moral Imperative

"I would come home and there would be no electricity, I would have no water to bathe in. Sometimes there wouldn't be food, there would just be water in the refrigerator."

— Taylor, 16, Texas

No child should go without basic necessities in the richest nation on earth. Yet nearly 1 in 5 children in America—12.8 million—live in poverty and face these harsh realities every day. Their suffering is not an inevitability—it is a direct result of the moral, economic and political choices we make as a nation.

We can end child poverty if we choose to fight rather than ignore it. We already know how—but we must expand and invest in the solutions. Benefits like nutrition assistance, housing vouchers and tax credits kept nearly 7 million children out of poverty in 2017, but millions were still left behind because our safety net is stretched too thin and wages are too low. We can and must fix these problems to help more children escape poverty.

By investing an additional 1.4 percent of the federal budget into existing programs and policies proven to increase employment, make work pay, and meet children's basic needs, our nation could cut child poverty 57 percent and lift 5.5 million children out of poverty right now.

How to Lift 5.5 Million Children Out of Poverty

Increase Employment and Make Work Pay

1. **Provide transitional jobs for families with children:** Too many workers are excluded from the workforce. Transitional jobs would provide work for the unemployed and underemployed, enabling them to earn income and build skills.
2. **Raise the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour by 2024:**
A parent with two children working full time at the current minimum wage earns \$4,669 below the poverty level. Raising the minimum wage would help ensure working families earn enough to support their families.
3. **Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for the lowest income families:** The EITC is one of the nation's most effective tools for reducing child poverty, keeping about 3 million children out of poverty in 2016. Boosting the EITC would reward work and better serve poor families.
4. **Make the Child Tax Credit (CTC) fully refundable and increase its value for young children:** The CTC provides families up to \$2,000 for each child under 17 to offset child rearing costs. However, because the credit is not fully refundable and families earning below \$2,500 a year are ineligible, the poorest families benefit least. Current limitations deny about 27 million children the CTC's full benefits or any benefits at all. Expanding the eligibility and value of the CTC would ensure more poor working families benefit.
5. **Expand child care assistance for needy families without co-pays.** Center-based infant care costs more than in-state college tuition in 28 states and DC, but fewer than 1 in 5 children receive child care subsidies. Expanding these subsidies would help more parents get the child care assistance they need to work.

6. **Make the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) refundable and increase its value:** The CDCTC reimburses families for some of their child or dependent care expenses. Because it is nonrefundable and only reimburses 35 percent of expenses, many low-income families benefit too little or not at all. Making the credit refundable would help these families reduce out-of-pocket child care costs.

Meet Children's Basic Needs

7. **Increase the value of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits:** With SNAP benefits averaging only \$1.40 per person per meal, half of all households receiving SNAP are still food insecure. Increasing the value of SNAP would help more families put food on the table.
8. **Expand housing vouchers for needy families with children:** Fewer than 1 in 4 families with children receive housing vouchers due to inadequate funding. Expanding housing vouchers would ensure more children had a place to sleep.
9. **Help more families keep child support payments:** Many states take child support payments to reimburse themselves for providing benefits to poor families. Requiring states to pass through child support to families and discount child support when calculating benefits would ensure children receive the financial support they need.

Let's unite our hearts and voices to end child poverty!

God did not create two classes of children. As people of faith, we have a moral obligation to ensure all of God's children have enough—enough nutritious food, stable shelter, quality health care and other basic necessities.

Ask your members of Congress to advance proven policies to help millions of today's children escape poverty. To learn more and send a message, visit www.childrendefense.org/lending-child-poverty-now/.



Ending Child Poverty Now: Poverty is Too Costly for Our Children and Nation

"We slept in the car. We had to, because we had no home. I slept in the back seat. My sister laid in the front. My mom laid in the front. Her head was back. My sister's head was on the side. I laid flat... We went to IHOP and we only got one pancake and we shared it. That was our breakfast."

—Jasmine, age 7

No child should have to worry whether she will have a place to sleep at night or enough food to eat in the wealthiest nation on earth. Yet more than 12.8 million children in America—nearly 1 in 5—live in poverty and face these harsh realities every day.

When we let millions of children grow up poor without basic necessities like food, housing and health care, we deny them equal opportunities to succeed and rob our nation of their potential. Poverty stacks the odds against children and stalks them down every avenue of their lives. Starting in infancy and continuing through to adulthood, poverty can haunt and harm children at every stage of life.

Poverty denies opportunities and deprives children in ways beyond material well-being.

- **Poverty creates gaps in cognitive skills in babies.** Income-related gaps in cognitive skills can be observed in babies as early as 9 months and often worsen with age.
- **Poverty leaves children without food they need to survive and thrive.** In 2017, more than 43 percent of poor children lived in homes where not everyone had enough to eat.
- **Poverty robs children of safe, stable housing.** Nearly 1.4 million homeless children were enrolled in public schools in 2016-2017.
- **Poverty jeopardizes children's health.** Poor children are less likely to be in good health and more likely to suffer adverse childhood experiences like the death or incarceration of a parent.
- **Poverty threatens children's academic potential.** Poor children are less likely to enter school ready to learn and less likely to graduate from high school.
- **Poverty increases children's chances of becoming a poor adult.** People who experienced poverty during childhood are more than three times as likely to be poor at age 30 than those who never experienced poverty.

Child poverty has huge economic, social and moral costs for all of us.

Beyond its individual human costs, child poverty takes a heavy toll on our nation's economy, productivity and soul. Leaving millions of children in poverty costs our nation about \$700 billion a year in lost productivity and increased health and crime costs. And it exacts a high moral cost when we, as a rich nation blessed with an abundance of resources, fail to do what we can to protect the youngest and most vulnerable among us.

We must eliminate the terrible human and economic waste of child poverty—and we can get started now.

Inaction is not an option—child poverty is too costly for our children and nation. We cannot afford to wait another 3, 5 or 10 years to end child poverty—and we don't have to.

CDF's recent report, *Ending Child Poverty Now*, outlines immediate steps Congress can take to make a down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty.

By investing an additional 1.4 percent of our federal budget into existing programs and policies to increase employment, make work pay, and meet children's basic needs, our nation could reduce child poverty at least 57 percent and lift 5.5 million children out of poverty right now.

We can end child poverty if we choose to fight rather than ignore it. We have the money. We have the power. We have the know-how. And we all have the moral, social and economic responsibility.

Let's unite our hearts and voices to end child poverty!

God did not create two classes of children. As people of faith, we have a moral obligation to ensure all of God's children have enough—enough nutritious food, stable shelter, quality health care and other basic necessities.

Ask your members of Congress to advance proven policies to help millions of today's children escape poverty. To learn more and send a message, visit www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/.



Ending Child Poverty Now: A Bargain Our Nation Can Easily Afford

“Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry.”

– Pope Francis

It is a national, moral disgrace that nearly 1 in 5 children in America live in poverty. Their suffering is not inevitable, necessary or defensible. Sentencing more than 12.8 million children to poverty is a choice—an immoral choice—in a nation with the world's largest economy.

We have more than enough resources and knowledge to conquer our child poverty crisis, but we have chosen to use our ever-growing affluence to enrich the wealthiest few at the expense of millions of poor children and families. In 2017, the Trump administration and Congress gave \$1.9 trillion in massive tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy. Our callous and morally blind lawmakers put billionaires before babies, corporations before children and greed before need.

What religious texts do these members of Congress and those who lobby them read? How did they miss the clear warnings of the prophets and gospels and tenets of every great faith to care for the poor, the sick, the lame and the orphan? Where did they learn that denying children basic survival needs of food and shelter to reward the wealthy and powerful is acceptable?

Just consider some facts about the \$1.9 trillion tax package. Under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act:

- The top 1 percent of households will receive **\$84 billion** in tax handouts this year alone—more than 39 million children and adults will receive in SNAP assistance to meet their basic survival needs.
- The top 20 percent of households will receive **\$225 billion** in tax cuts this year—three-fifths as much as the federal government invested in *all* 73.7 million children and children's programs in America.
- After a decade, **83 percent** of these tax benefits will flow to the richest 1 percent of Americans.

Imagine if our leaders invested as much in babies as in billionaires. According to the Children's Defense Fund, modest improvements to nine policies could lift 5.5 million children out of poverty for \$52.3 billion a year—less than *half* the annual cost of President Trump's tax giveaways for the rich. A \$1.9 trillion investment could lift these children out of poverty until adulthood!

For lawmakers who spend trillions to pad the pockets of the rich, withholding help for the poor is not an act of fiscal practicality but moral bankruptcy. We cannot let our leaders

spend \$1.9 trillion on tax giveaways for wealthy individuals and corporations and then say we cannot afford to ensure every child is housed and fed.

Tradeoffs: Paying to End Child Poverty

There are many ways to pay for a 57 percent reduction in child poverty, such as:

- Closing tax loopholes that let U.S. corporations avoid almost \$200 billion in federal taxes each year by shifting profits to subsidiaries in tax havens;
- or
- Eliminating tax breaks for the wealthy by taxing capital gains and dividends at the same rates as wages, saving more than \$84 billion a year;
- or
- Decreasing by 10 percent our nation's \$686 billion military budget.

Making a down payment on ending child poverty will benefit all of us. Every dollar invested in alleviating child poverty returns at least \$7 to our economy. Not only can we afford to end child poverty; we can't afford not to.

It's time to put children's welfare before corporate welfare. Babies' survival needs should trump billionaires' greed. We can and must provide enough for children with too little instead of padding the pockets of millionaires and billionaires with far more than their fair share of government assistance.



4. Sacred Texts on Poverty and Justice for Children

This section provides excerpts from sacred texts of various religious traditions on poverty. There are, of course, many more passages from sacred texts as well as teachings and practices from these and other traditions related to poverty, love, justice, children, faith and action. Consider using one of the following excerpts or others from your faith tradition in your services to uplift our moral obligation to end child poverty now.

The Baha'i Faith

O children of dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

(Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian No. 49)

O ye rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. ***(Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian No. 54)***

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 285)

God has created all, and all return to God. Therefore, love humanity with all your heart and soul.

If you meet a poor man, assist him; if you see the sick, heal him; reassure the affrighted one, render the cowardly noble and courageous, educate the ignorant, associate with the stranger.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 290)

Buddhism

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it. ***(Itivuttaka 18)***

Better than a hundred years lived in idleness and in weakness is a single day lived with courage and powerful striving. ***(The Dhammapada, 112)***

Whatever living beings there may be—feeble or strong, small or large, seen or unseen, those who live far or those near, those who are born and those who are yet to be born—may all beings, without exception, experience a happy mind. Let one not deceive another nor despise any person whatever in any place. In anger or ill will let one not wish any harm to another. Let one's thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

(Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)

It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going. ***(Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)***

Christianity

Then someone came to him and said, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these; what do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

(Matthew 19:16-22)

When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." **(Luke 4:16-21)**

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

(Matthew 25:31-40)

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
"Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled

"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

"Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

(Luke 6:20-26)

Hinduism

Ajyesthaso akanishthaso ete sambhrataro vahaduhu saubhagaya

No one is superior, none inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity.

(Ancient Hindu hymn)

The husband and wife of the house should not turn away any who comes at eating time and asks for food. If food is not available, a place to rest, water for refreshing one's self, a reed mat to lay one's self on, and pleasing words entertaining the guest—these at least never fail in the houses of the good.

(Apastamba Dharmasutra 8.2)

A householder must give (as much food) as he is able (to spare) to those who do not cook for themselves, and to all beings one must distribute (food) without detriment (to one's own interest).

(Manu Smriti 4.32)

In the kingdom of God there is no premature death or suffering, everyone is healthy and beautiful. No one lives in poverty and want; no one is without learning or virtue. **(The Ramayana)**

Islam

And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive. **(Qur'an 76:8)**

"The creatures of God (i.e., humans) are the children (i.e., liability and responsibility) of God, and the most beloved to God are those who show kind and excellent treatment to His children."

(Qur'an 60:8)

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and

to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God. **(Qur'an S. 2:177, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation)**

They ask thee what they should spend (In charity.) Say: Whatever wealth Ye spend that is good, Is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers and whatever ye do that is good, -Allah knoweth it well. **(Qur'an S. 2, 215, IFTA translation)**

Judaism

Thus said the Eternal: A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Eternal: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears; for there is reward in your labor — declares the Eternal. They shall return from the enemy's land, and there is hope for your future — declares the Eternal, and your children shall return to their country. **(Jeremiah 31:15-17)**

Defend the poor and the orphan; do justice to the afflicted and needy. **(Midrash Tehillim 82:3)**

You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I enjoin you to observe this commandment...when you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. **(Deuteronomy 24:17-18, 21)**

Although the giving of charity is a sacred obligation, the ultimate aim of tzedakah is to abolish poverty and to enable the poor to help themselves. **(Talmud, Shabbat 63)**

Sikhism

To do good deeds is the best rosary.

Chant on the beads within your heart, and it shall go along with you.

Chant the Name of the Lord, Har, Har, the Lord of the forest.

Have mercy on me, Lord, and unite me with the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, so that I may be released from Maya's noose of death.

Whoever, as Gurmukh, serves and works hard,

Is molded and shaped in the true mint of the Shabad, the Word of God.

The Guru has revealed to me the Inaccessible and Unfathomable Lord.

Searching within the body-village, I have found the Lord.

I am just a child; the Lord is my Father, who nurtures and cherishes me.

Please save servant Nanak, Lord; bless him with Your Glance of Grace.

(SGGS, Ang 1134 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Ram Das)

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:

No one should be proud of his social class and status.

He alone is a Brahmin, who knows God.

Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool!

So much sin and corruption comes from this pride.

Everyone says that there are four castes, four social classes.

They all emanate from the drop of God's Seed

The entire universe is made of the same clay.

The Potter has shaped it into all sorts of vessels.

The five elements join together, to make up the form of the human body.

Who can say which is less, and which is more?

Says Nanak, this soul is bound by its actions.

Without meeting the True Guru, it is not liberated. **(SGGS, Ang 1127-1128 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Amar Das)**

As the king is entangled in kingly affairs, and the egotist in his own egotism,
And the greedy man is enticed by greed, so is the spiritually enlightened being absorbed in the Love of the Lord.

This is what befits the Lord's servant.

Beholding the Lord near at hand, he serves the True Guru, and he is satisfied through the Kirtan of the Lord's Praises.

The addict is addicted to his drug, and the landlord is in love with his land.

As the baby is attached to his milk, so the Saint is in love with God.

The scholar is absorbed in scholarship, and the eyes are happy to see.

As the tongue savors the tastes, so does the humble servant of the Lord sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord.

As is the hunger, so is the fulfiller; He is the Lord and Master of all hearts.

Nanak thirsts for the Blessed Vision of the Lord's Darshan; he has met God, the Inner-knower, the Searcher of hearts. **(SSGS, Ang 613)**

Those who remember God generously help others. **(SGGS)**





5. Social Media Posts & Graphics

Use your voices and stories on social media to change the conversation and build a movement to end child poverty.

Individuals and congregations calling in unison for change will help pressure lawmakers to take urgent action for our children. An expanded social media toolkit can also be found at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>.

Tips for Social Media Posts

When drafting or sharing posts, be sure to use the following hashtags: #EndChildPovertyNow (primary), #ChildPoverty, #PovertyLooksLike

Don't forget to tag CDF! Twitter: [@ChildDefender](#), Instagram: [@ChildDefender1973](#), Facebook: [@childrensdefensefund](#)

Sample Social Media Posts

The majority of poor children live with an adult who works, and yet those families still struggle to provide necessities like food, shelter and clothing. Be a voice for children and help #EndChildPovertyNow <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>



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Continuing to allow nearly 1 in 5 children to grow up poor robs our nation of their future contributions. The fight to #EndChildPovertyNow is not only morally just—it's a national imperative. <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>

1 IN 5 CHILDREN LIVES IN POVERTY



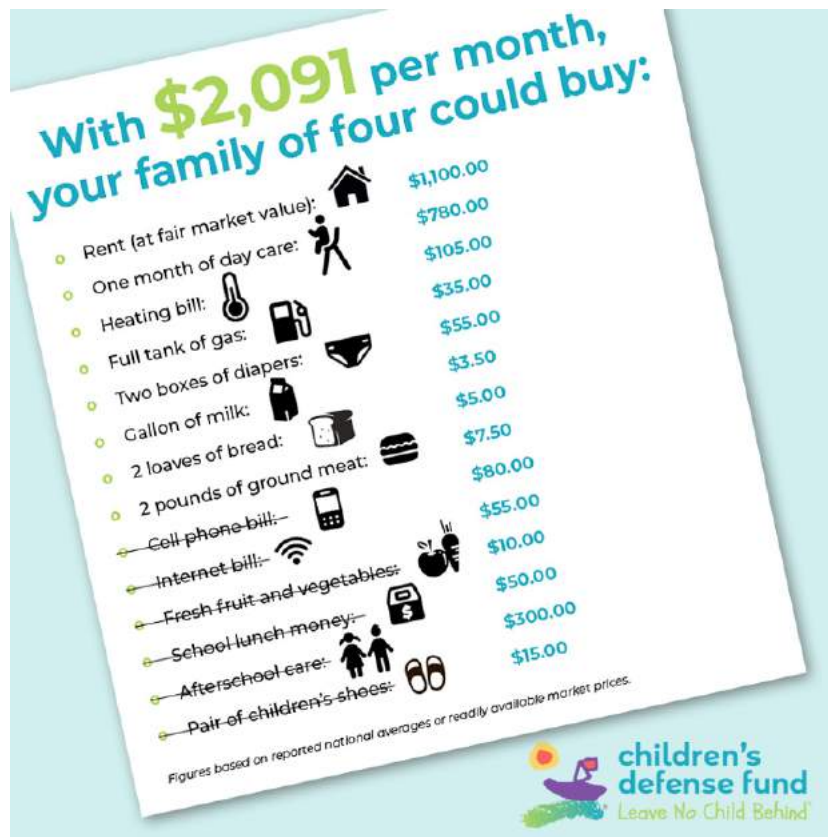
Download this graphic: [General Use](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

The gap between rich and poor has reached historic heights not seen since the 1920s, and our children are bearing the greatest burden. Now is the time to demand we take action to #EndChildPovertyNow <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>

Poverty is expensive. Every year, the nation loses an estimated \$700 BILLION due to the costs of child poverty. We can take action to #EndChildPovertyNow and add billions to our economy! Learn more and join us: <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>



Could your family of 4 live on just \$17 per day, per person? Poverty in this country is defined as an annual income below \$25,094 for a family of four: that's just \$69/day or \$2,091/month. Nearly 1 in 5 children live below that level. Let's #EndChildPovertyNow. <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>



Principles of justice must guide our feet and inform our national priorities—not power, wealth and militarism. We MUST put babies' survival before billionaires' greed and begin to #EndChildPovertyNow <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>

The great undertaking of saving America's children will save America's soul and our future. I stand with @ChildDefender to #EndChildPovertyNow: <https://www.childrensdefense.org/ending-child-poverty-now/>

Visit our website, www.childrensdefense.org/, to download these graphics.



children's defense fund

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