

## **Sample Op-Ed**

340 words (without customization)

### **Now is the time for lawmakers to stand up for children**

By U.S. **Senator/Representative Firstname Lastname**

The last two years have been difficult for all of us in the United States. But perhaps no one has struggled more than our children.

The coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout affected every aspect of the lives of our children: Their education was disrupted, their physical and mental health was challenged, millions faced hunger, homelessness and financial insecurity, and [more than 250,000](#) U.S. children lost parents or caregivers. And yet, by standing up for their needs, lawmakers managed to deliver the most significant investment in our children in decades.

Legislation passed in response to the coronavirus pandemic increased the [share of federal spending on children from 7.64% to a historic 11.15%](#). These long-overdue investments addressed decades of deferred maintenance on the health and well-being of our nation's children. Together, they cut child poverty nearly in half, reduced hunger and poor nutrition among children, kept children in their homes and provided much-needed health care. We did all of this in the middle of a national emergency.

Now, the task remains to renew these commitments and to make such care for our children the norm, not the exception.

I recently was named a 2021 **Champion/Defender** for Children by the bipartisan children's advocacy organization [First Focus Campaign for Children](#). The nonprofit's [2021 Legislative Scorecard](#) recognizes 120 lawmakers across both parties and chambers who have worked to prioritize children. Awards are nice. They make us feel good. And they can signal to our constituents that perhaps we are getting things done.

But the work behind this award is what really matters. Children do not vote and they do not have powerful political action committees to promote their needs in Congress. So it's up to lawmakers to do what they know is right and protect children's best interests.

***[CUSTOM PARAGRAPH] To adapt this op-ed for media outlets in your state or district, consider discussing one or two challenges facing children there. Local statistics for child poverty, homelessness, enrollment in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program, or other program needs might be helpful. You might also consider highlighting legislation that you've sponsored.***

It is up to us – members of Congress – and the public that supports us, to demand that we put “the best interest of the child” first. Only when we do that, will we finally, truly put the best interest of our country first.

Senator [Firstname Lastname ] has represented [state] in Congress since [year of election]. This is their [#th] year as a First Focus Campaign for Children [Champion/Defender] for Children.

OR

Representative [Firstname Lastname ] has represented [state's] [###th district] in Congress since [year of election]. This is their [#th] year as a First Focus Campaign for Children [Champion/Defender] for Children.

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