

## FACT SHEET:

# TARGETING CHILDREN: THE UNSEEN IMPACTS OF PROPOSED DOGE CUTS TO PROGRAMS AWAITING REAUTHORIZATION



Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, the leaders of President-elect Trump's newly created Department of Government Efficiency, announced in the Wall Street Journal that it plans to **eliminate more than \$500 billion in programs** that Congress has not formally extended but continues to support through annual spending decisions. Many of these “unauthorized” programs provide essential support for wide swaths of the population, such as veterans and low-income children.

Many of these programs also remain critical priorities for Congress, despite lawmakers' delay in formally extending them. For instance, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which helps families find and afford child care for over 1.5 million children, has received continuous increases in funding over the previous decade across both Republican and Democrat administrations even without a formal authorization bill.

The Department of Government Efficiency is not actually a government agency and has **no power to cut programs or direct spending in any way**. The power of the purse remains firmly in the hands of Congress. But if lawmakers decide to enact these recommendations, they will substantially reduce federal support for children, which already **fell nearly 6% (adjusted for inflation) in FY 2024 alone**.

First Focus on Children cross-referenced programs that **would qualify for the chopping block** with the amount of investment these programs allocated to children in FY 2024 as reported in our **Children's Budget 2024**.<sup>1</sup>

**Overall, we find that cutting these programs would cost children a total of \$101.120 billion in critical investment, making up 19.6% of total funding cuts proposed by Musk and Ramaswamy.** Given that children's spending makes up only 8.87% of all federal spending, the burden of these cuts would severely and disproportionately fall on children. These disinvestments would include:

- **\$35.766 billion in support offered to veterans caring for dependent children**
- **\$26.445 billion in education funding for K-12 students**
- **\$12.272 billion in funding for Head Start and Early Head Start**
- **\$10.688 billion for children from Tenant-Based Housing Assistance**
- **\$8.746 billion from the Child Care and Development Block Grant**
- **\$1.839 billion in funding for children's health initiatives at the National Institutes of Health, including childhood cancer initiatives and environmental health research**
- **\$1.808 billion (at minimum) in international support for children**

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- \$ 805 million in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- \$417.7 million in Juvenile Justice and Safety programs
- \$388.7 million in funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Training Programs

These cuts would represent an unconscionable attack on federal support for children. Lawmakers should reject any haphazard attempts to slash essential programs based on arbitrary status of formal authorization bills.

## ENDNOTES

1. Analysis is limited to major programs detailed in the CBO report and Senate Budget analyses linked above as well as only programs with at least \$50 million in total appropriations; some smaller program cuts may also affect children, further increasing total cuts.