



HOMELAND INSECURITY...

... WHY CHILDREN MUST BE A PRIORITY IN THE
2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

EVERY CHILD *matters*
education fund



Dear Reader,

We all know the life chances of children are vastly improved when they are the top priority of supportive families and communities. Most American children live in such secure environments and sail into young adulthood physically and emotionally healthy, becoming productive members of society.

But as the numbers which follow show, this happy ending eludes many millions of other children, children challenged by problems that should not exist in the world's wealthiest nation, problems which eventually affect all Americans, rich and poor alike, and weaken both our economy and our democracy.

The pages which follow focus on health, child abuse, imprisonment and poverty. These are big issues affecting millions of children and families. But there are others that also must be addressed: substance abuse, homelessness, the lack of quality child care for millions of children while parents work, no access to school readiness experiences for millions more, and yet additional millions unsupervised and alone every day after school.

To spotlight the need for smart new national investments in all of our children, the Every Child Matters Education Fund is waging a non-partisan public education campaign during the 2008 presidential race. Our goal is to win new investments in health, education, and social programs – and to make homeland security a reality for all American children and families.

Please join us in insisting that the next president provides the leadership to make certain every child matters.

Michael R. Petit
President, Every Child Matters



HOMELAND INSECURITY

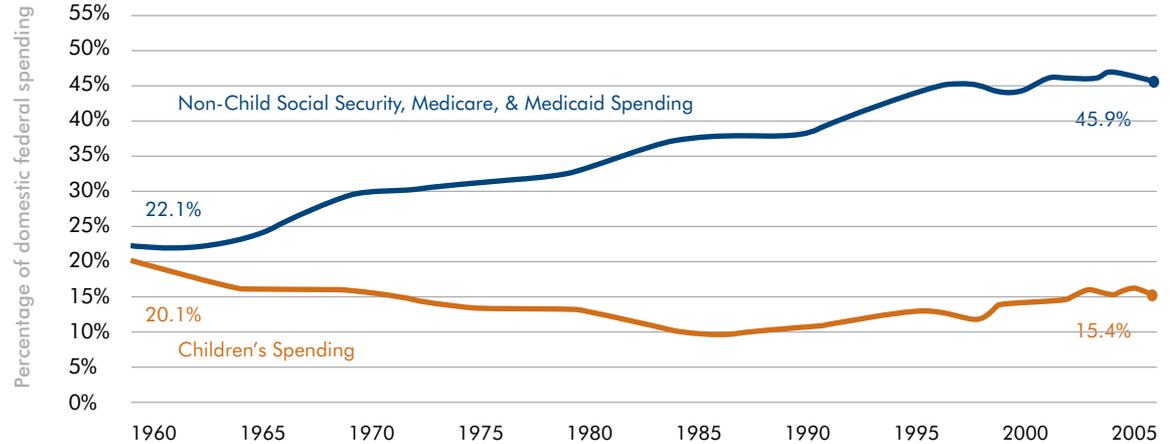
A REALITY FOR MILLIONS OF CHILDREN

8 MILLION American children are without health insurance, more than 3 MILLION are reported abused and neglected, nearly 2 MILLION have parents in prison, and 13 MILLION live in poverty's grip.

A key ingredient in the development of the nation's great wealth has long been its ability and willingness to invest in the creation of opportunities for all its children, helping them become productive members of society. But in recent decades, as seen in Chart 1.1, national investments in a wide range of children's health and social programs have been declining as a percentage of domestic spending in the federal budget.

Federal Spending on Children and Major Entitlements as a Share of Domestic Federal Spending

1960-2005 • Chart 1.1ⁱ



The result? The well-being of children in the United States ranks a poor 20th among 21 rich democracies according to a recent UNICEF report.

UNICEF ranking of child well-being in rich democracies

Chart 1.2ⁱⁱ

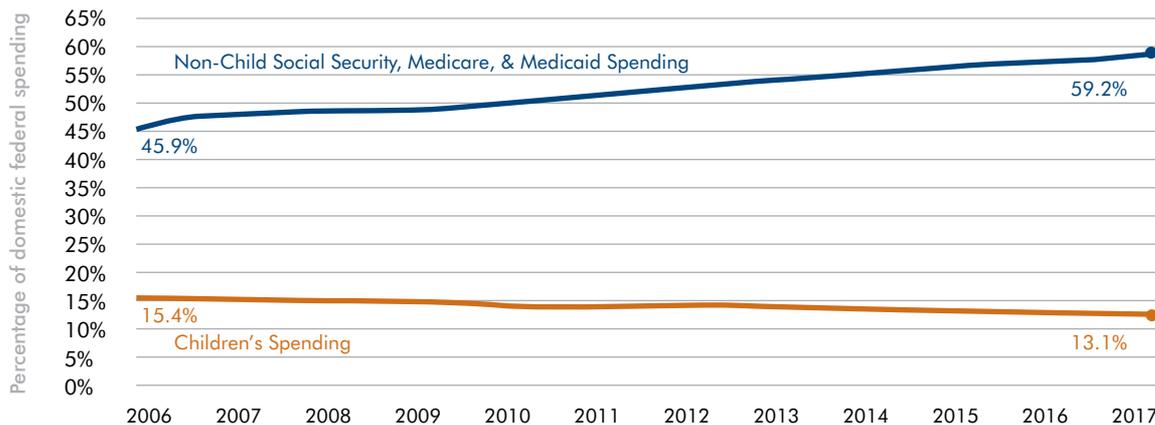
1	Netherlands	12	Canada
2	Sweden	13	Greece
3	Denmark	14	Poland
4	Finland	15	Czech Republic
5	Spain	16	France
6	Switzerland	17	Portugal
7	Norway	18	Austria
8	Italy	19	Hungary
9	Ireland	20	United States
10	Belgium	21	United Kingdom
11	Germany		

And within the United States itself, wide gaps in child well-being exist among the states: compared to the states with the best outcomes for children, children in the bottom states are twice as likely to live in poverty, twice as likely to be without health insurance, four times as likely to be incarcerated, and twice as likely to die before their fourteenth birthday.

Alarming, relative spending on children is projected to decline still further for the next decade, as seen in [Chart 1.3](#).

Federal Spending on Children and Major Entitlements as a Share of Domestic Federal Spending

2006-2017 • [Chart 1.3](#)^m



This is not what the public wants. Repeated polling commissioned by Every Child Matters shows that across the nation and across the political spectrum voters support new national investments in children. That's because the public knows intuitively what all research confirms: spending on kids has a great return on investment. It keeps the U.S. competitive in a global market. It allows better support for an aging population. It prevents minor problems from becoming major. And it fulfills a moral commitment every generation has to those which follow.

WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS.

Lack of health care, abuse and neglect, imprisonment, poverty—these conditions confront American children on a scale unknown in the other rich democracies. These countries, competitors and allies alike, recognize that smart investments which pull all children and families forward benefit everyone. It's time for America to recommit to this same great goal.



Rx FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN START WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

Eight million children at any moment are without health insurance.^{iv} Almost all have at least one parent who works full-time. Over a two year period, nearly 27 million children will have no coverage for at least some of the time.^v In no other rich country does such a condition exist.

Uninsured children are almost five times more likely to delay medical care and four to five times as likely to go without eyeglasses or medicines.^{vi} Some lose their hearing because a preventable infection was not treated. Many are not immunized against easily preventable communicable diseases. Simple health problems become major ones.

As seen in [Chart 2.1](#), the U.S. ranks last among the rich democracies on the two most important health measures—infant mortality and longevity—even though we spend much more on medical care. Virtually all citizens in the other rich democracies are insured. More than 46 million Americans are not, which helps explain why nearly half of all U.S. bankruptcies involve medical bills.

How the U.S. compares to other rich democracies on key health measures • [Chart 2.1](#)^{vii}

G7 Countries	Infant Mortality Rate 2005, per 1000 Live Births	Life Expectancy at Birth in years, 2005	Per capita spending on Health
Japan	3	82.5	\$2,293
Germany	4	79	\$3,171
France	4	80.5	\$3,040
Italy	4	81	\$2,414
United Kingdom	5	79	\$2,560
Canada	5	80.5	\$3,173
United States	7	77.5	\$6,096

And as can be seen in Charts 2.2 and 2.3, wide variations in access to health care and in health care outcomes exist among the states. The life and death of children should not be influenced by the state they live in. But they are.

Percent of Children Uninsured

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 2.2^{viii}

State	% of Children Uninsured (Census 2005)	
	Percent	Rank
Massachusetts	4.2	1
Alabama	4.5	2
Iowa	5.0	3
Michigan	5.0	3
Hawaii	5.3	5
Nevada	14.3	46
Arizona	16.4	47
Florida	18.1	48
Texas	18.9	49
New Mexico	20.0	50

Chart 2.2 shows how U.S. children in the bottom 5 states are 3.5 times as likely to be uninsured as children in the top 5. A New Mexico child is almost 5 times as likely to be uninsured as a child in Massachusetts.

Deaths of Children 1-14

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 2.3^{ix}

State	Rank	Deaths
		per 100,000 Children 1-14
Rhode Island	1	11
Vermont	2	12
Massachusetts	2	12
Connecticut	4	14
New Jersey	4	14
Mississippi	45	31
Arkansas	47	34
Louisiana	47	34
Alaska	49	35
South Dakota	50	39

Chart 2.3 shows that a child in the bottom states is 2.7 times as likely to die by the age of 14 as a child in the top states. South Dakota children are 3.5 times as likely to die by the age of 14 as Rhode Island children.



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT A DARK SIDE OF AMERICA...

In 2005 at least 1,460 children died as a result of abuse or neglect at home. The true number may be double that figure.^x 77% of the fatalities were children under age four — mostly infants and toddlers.^{xi}

With more than three million reports of abuse and neglect each year, it isn't surprising that polls show deep concern about the problem. But stopping child abuse is not a political priority even though it claims the lives of thousands, ruins the lives of millions, and costs taxpayers more than \$100 billion annually^{xii} on related crime, imprisonment, mental health, special education, medical care, and drug abuse.

The amount of help an abused child receives is largely an accident of geography; some states do a much better job than others. No states are in full compliance with federal child welfare standards.^{xiii} As shown in [Chart 3.1](#), the difference spent on protecting children among states is dramatic.

Per capita spending to protect abused children

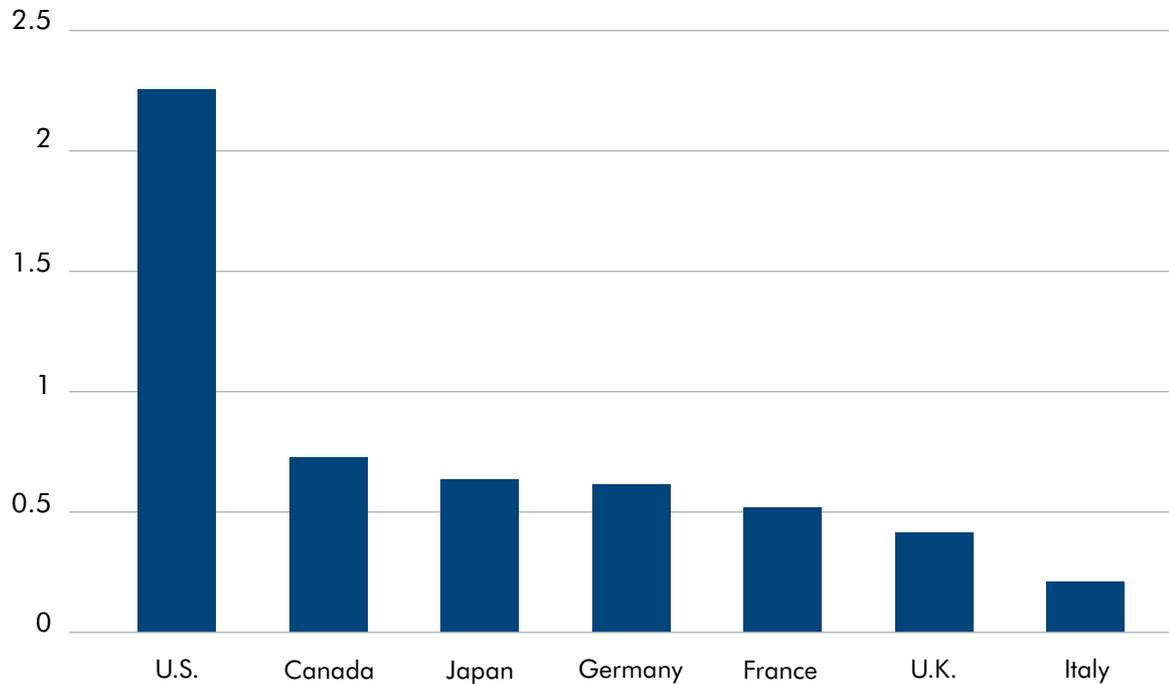
Chart 3.1^{xiv}

The top 5 states fund child welfare programs at almost 4 times the level of the bottom 5. Child welfare spending in Rhode Island is more than 6 times Mississippi's.

State	Per Capita Child Welfare Expenditures
Rhode Island	\$188
Pennsylvania	\$143
Alaska	\$136
Vermont	\$131
California	\$125
Virginia	\$39
Texas	\$39
Arkansas	\$37
Nevada	\$36
Mississippi	\$30

Child Maltreatment Deaths

per 100,000 Children • Chart 3.2™



Child abuse deaths in the U.S. are much higher than in the other rich democracies as can be seen in Chart 3.2

The U.S. child abuse death rate is 3 times as high as Canada's and 11 times as high as Italy's.

Unless new investments are made to prevent child abuse the sad story of abuse will continue to repeat itself from one generation of troubled families to the next.



PRISONS

A REFLECTION OF FAILED SOCIAL POLICY

The United States has less than 5% of the world's population and 24% of the world's prisoners, yet it continues to have much higher crime rates than the other rich democracies.^{xvi}

The U.S. prison population increased nearly 600% between 1980 and 2005, rising from 320,000 to almost 2.2 million.^{xvii} Imprisonment has become a substitute for addressing substance abuse, poverty, mental illness, and educational failure. It jeopardizes the life chances of millions of children who have a parent in prison.

Despite its greater reliance on incarceration, as seen in [Chart 4.1](#), the U.S. homicide rate is three times the United Kingdom's and more than eight times Japan's.

Incarceration and Homicide in rich democracies • [Chart 4.1](#)

Prison Population per 100,000 People ^{xviii}	Nation	Homicides per 100,000 People ^{xix}
737	United States	4.28
134	United Kingdom	1.41
107	Canada	1.49
93	Germany	1.16
85	France	1.73
67	Italy	1.28
62	Japan	0.50

The prison population is overwhelmingly poor, uneducated, and disproportionately minority.

There is a high correlation between problems in childhood and incarceration.^{xx} Childhood trauma does not excuse a future criminal act. But it can explain how bad behavior is manufactured. It can begin in utero when a fetus is assaulted by the mother’s substance abuse, or when a toddler is victimized by a father’s unrestrained violence.

Violent offenders belong in prison. But instead of funding smart policies proven to deter crime in the first place, as in other democracies, U.S. policy favors locking up ever more offenders, including the 1.2 million non-violent offenders on whom nearly \$24 billion was spent in 2000.^{xxi}

Present prison policies weigh most heavily on African-Americans:

- Black males are 44% of all inmates with sentences of more than a year – but are only 6.5% of the U.S. population.^{xxii}
- The incarceration rate for American black men is four times higher than it was in South Africa during its apartheid era.^{xxiii}

Imprisonment of women has skyrocketed, from 12,000 women in prison in 1980 to 104,000 in 2004—an increase of almost 900%.^{xxiv} Most women prisoners are poor. Their crimes often include credit card abuse or check forgery.^{xxv} About one-third are serving mandatory sentences for drug offenses.^{xxvi}

As seen in [Chart 4.2](#) the states which show the best outcomes for children also predictably show the lowest rates of adult incarceration.

Taking Care of Children Leads to Less Imprisonment

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 4.2

State	Imprisonment Rank	Overall Child Well-being Rank ^{xxvii}	Incarceration per 1000 Adults ^{xxvii}
Maine	1	4	2.01
Massachusetts	2	3	2.26
Minnesota	3	6	2.47
New Hampshire	4	1	2.61
North Dakota	5	16	2.92
Mississippi	46	50	9.86
Texas	47	46	10.58
Alaska	48	40	10.59
Louisiana	49	49	11.11
Delaware	50	30	11.14

Adults in the bottom 5 states are almost 4.5 times as likely to be incarcerated as adults in the top 5. Louisiana’s incarceration rate is 5.5 times Maine’s.



CHILD POVERTY

IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE SO HIGH

Located at the center of the nation's second-highest income metro area, Washington, DC's child poverty rate of 38.6% is higher than that of any state.^{xxxix} In the world's most powerful capital, wretched poverty begins a few blocks from the Capitol.

It's been decades since Congress had a serious debate about poverty. The welfare reform legislation of the 1990's was not about reducing child poverty. It was about reducing the number of families on the welfare rolls, which it did — from 4.4 million families in 1996 to 1.8 million today.^{xxx} But there are still millions of children in working families living below the poverty level.

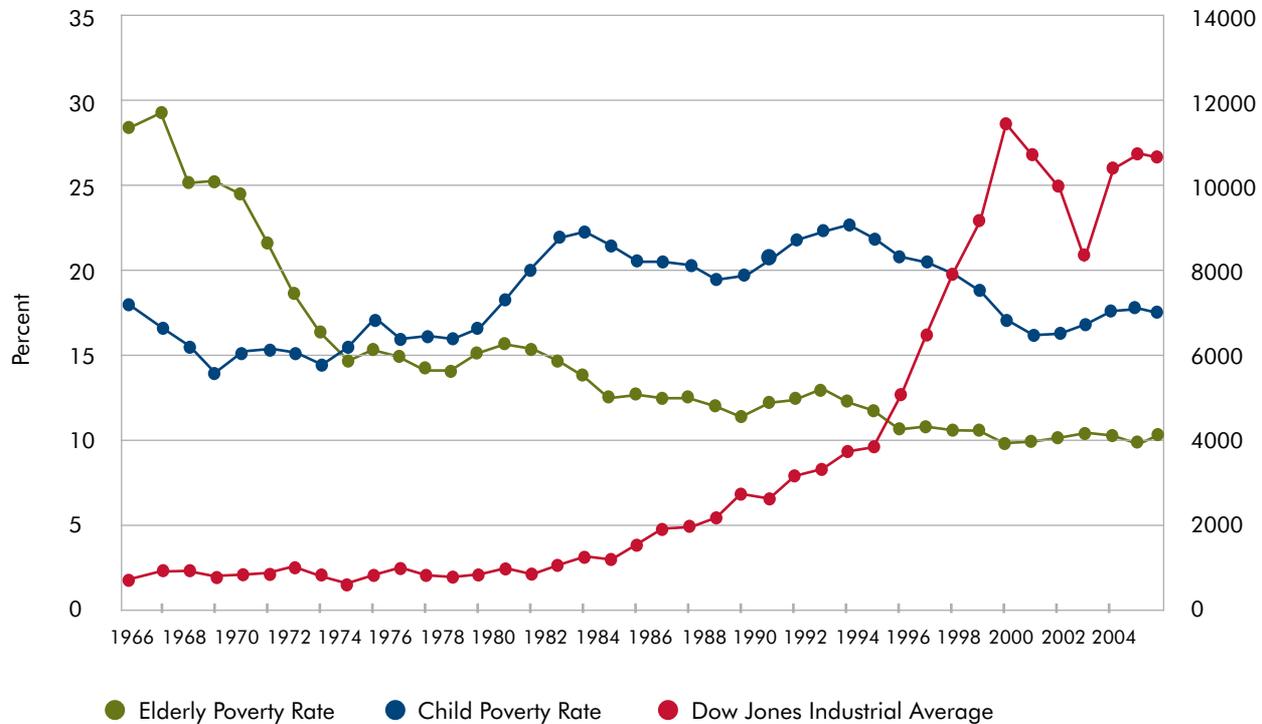
IN 2005:^{xxxii}

- 39 percent of America's 73 million children lived in low income families, 18% lived below the official poverty line.
- White children accounted for 39% of low-income children.
- 61% of black children lived in low-income families.
- 61% of Hispanic children lived in low-income families.

The U.S. has the second-worst child poverty rate (after Mexico) among 26 rich countries.^{xxxiii} Other rich democracies have adopted policies which reduce child poverty much more sharply than the U.S.'s efforts. This isn't the result of not knowing how to reduce poverty among large groups: over the last 40 years, U.S. policies produced spectacular reductions in elderly poverty rates and now the elderly are the least poor. During the same period, child poverty remained constant despite huge gains in America's wealth as measured by the stock market (Chart 5.1). Federal spending in 2000 was more than eight times greater for persons over age 65 than under age 18 — \$17,700 per person versus \$2,100 per person.^{xxxiii} A fraction of such spending on children and families would cause a drop in child poverty every bit as dramatic and welcomed as the drop among the elderly.

Elderly and Child Poverty Rates

Chart 5.1 ^{xxxiv}



Poverty Is Not a Character Builder

“Poverty is associated with negative outcomes for children. It can impede children’s cognitive development and their ability to learn. It can contribute to behavioral, social and emotional problems. [it]...can lead to poor health...

[the risks]...are greatest among children who experience poverty when they are young and among children who experience persistent and deep poverty...”

Chart 5.2 confirms the U.S.'s weak anti-poverty performance on behalf of children. And as with other indicators, the differences in child poverty rates among the states are dramatic, as seen in Chart 5.3. In other rich countries, national policies narrow these regional differences.

The Effectiveness of Government Intervention on Child Poverty

Chart 5.2^{xxxv}

Country	Child Poverty Rate Before Government Intervention	Child Poverty Rate After Government Intervention	Percent Change
France	28%	7.5%	-73%
Germany	18%	10%	-44%
UK	25%	15%	-39%
Canada	23%	15%	-35%
U.S.	27%	22%	-18%

This chart shows the powerful effect of government policies in reducing child poverty rates — except in the U.S. where federal anti-poverty measures aimed at children are weak.

Child Poverty

top 5 and bottom 5 states • Chart 5.3^{xxxvi}

State	Rank	Child Poverty Rate
New Hampshire	1	5.5%
Vermont	2	7.4%
New Jersey	3	8.8%
Hawaii	4	10.0%
Minnesota	4	10.0%
Texas	46	22.0%
Alabama	47	24.7%
Louisiana	47	24.7%
New Mexico	47	24.7%
Mississippi	50	30.7%

A child in the bottom states is more than three times as likely to be living in poverty as a child in the top. A child in Mississippi is almost six times as likely to live in poverty as a child in New Hampshire.



IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE THIS WAY NEW INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MUST BE A NATIONAL PRIORITY

Whatever their political persuasion, the vast majority of Americans want more investments in their children and grandchildren. First, to improve each child's life chances for success, but also because the nation's global competitiveness depends on it and an aging population requires it.

We know a lot about healthy human growth and development. A vast amount of research exists which demonstrates the effectiveness of many policies and programs.

New investments in children and families should be guided by proven research, strict accountability, and national standards. They should be administered by a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, and non-profit, community-based organizations. [Links to detailed information about programs that work are on our web site.](#)



The great majority of Americans believe that their government has a moral responsibility to help provide for the health, education, and safety of children. Who doesn't believe in strengthening families?

It's time for a renewed national debate on the best ways our culture and our government can help families and children overcome homeland insecurity.

Every citizen can help by insisting that candidates for the White House and Congress present their agenda for addressing the needs children and families during their campaigns. That is the important first step in the country regaining its footing on the priorities that matter most.

WE CAN DO THIS.
OUR CHILDREN ARE WAITING.

For information on how to make children a priority in the 2008 election, to e-mail this booklet to a friend, or to get your free "I'm voting for kids" bumper sticker visit www.everychildmatters.org

Questions and comments can be sent to info@everychildmatters.org

ASK THE CANDIDATES



1. Over 8 million children have no health insurance in the U.S. *How do you propose to ensure that children grow up healthy and have access to comprehensive health care?*
2. 3.5 million children nationwide were reported abused and neglected in 2005. *What are your plans to keep all children safe from violence in their homes, schools, and communities?*
3. Millions of children are left alone every day after school. *What is your position on how to keep children safe and supervised in the late afternoon and early evening hours?*
4. Millions of children lack access to early learning opportunities. *What is your position on early learning and care, including preparing children for kindergarten?*
5. Almost 13 million of America's children live in poverty. *What would you do to help families with children become economically self-sufficient and able to provide for their family's needs?*
6. Millions of children have a parent in prison. *How would you address the needs of these children?*

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IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

Millions of children without health insurance.

Millions abused or neglected.

Millions living in poverty.

There are millions of reasons for our top elected officials to make investing in children a national priority.

NO EXCUSES.

BECAUSE EVERY CHILD MATTERS.

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