**Sample Op-Ed**

385 words (without customization)

**More lawmakers should stand up for children**

By U.S. Senator/Representative Firstname Lastname

2019 was a rough year for kids. Nearly one-in-six of our nation’s children lived in poverty. The number without health insurance rose to more than 4 million. More than 12 million children stared down hunger each day. And proposed policy changes sought to deprive millions more of food, housing and other life-sustaining assistance.

In Congress, some of my colleagues and I worked hard to buck this trend and put children first. We introduced bills to safeguard children’s programs, supported beneficial measures and voted against those that would harm children. Some of us even defied our party leadership to protect children’s interests.

For these actions, I was named a 2019 [Champion/Defender] for Children by the bipartisan children’s advocacy organization [First Focus Campaign for Children](https://campaignforchildren.org/). The nonprofit’s [2019 Legislative Scorecard](https://www.ffccscorecard.org/) 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. The actions that won me this distinction are necessary, you see, because 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.*

Children in all parts of our country need more attention than lawmakers traditionally have given them. Children make up one-quarter of our population, but we spend just 7.2% of the federal budget on them, according to the [First Focus on Children 2019 Children’s Budget](https://firstfocus.org/resources/report/childrens-budget-2019).

Research from the nonpartisan [Opportunity Insights project](https://opportunityinsights.org/paper/welfare/) suggests that for every dollar invested in children, our nation gets $1.47 back. Yet the share of federal spending on kids has declined 10% since 2015 and hit an all-time low last year. Last year was also the first time in our nation’s history that we spent more to service the national debt than we did on the children who will inherit it.

This trend must not continue. 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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