

CLASP

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

CLASP Supports End Child Poverty Act Proposed by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA)

Dear Senator Kennedy:

We applaud your decision to offer the "[End Child Poverty Act](#)" as an amendment to the tax reconciliation bill. The effort to set a national goal of reducing child poverty by half within a decade, and to eliminate it entirely as soon as possible after that, is both appropriate and important.

It is appropriate because the extent and depth of child poverty is discordant with the wealth and capacity of our nation. It is important because:

- 20 percent of children under age 6 live in poor families
- 16 percent of children age 6 or older live in poor families
- 75 percent of poor children under age three have at least one parent or relative who earned money to support family needs; 59 percent of poor children under age three rely exclusively on earnings.

The value of setting an explicit national goal is demonstrated by the experience of the United Kingdom. There, the government has established the goal of eliminating child poverty by 2020. The results have been significant. In the United States, child poverty fell from 22.7 percent in 1993 to 16.2 percent in 2000, but now stands at 17.8 percent after rising for three consecutive years. In sharp contrast, using a comparable measure for child poverty, researchers Timothy Smeeding and Jane Waldfogel have estimated that child poverty in the UK has fallen from 30 percent in 1993 to 11 percent today.

Part of the reason for this success is the decision to give child poverty priority. Once the priority and political will is established, work must be undertaken to determine the best mix of strategies to obtain the goals. The act recognizes this by establishing a Child Poverty Elimination Board to make recommendations to the President on how best to meet this commitment to children.

We thank you for your leadership and hope that the Act will be enacted.

Jodie Levin-Epstein
Deputy Director
Center for Law and Social Policy

Mark Greenberg
Director of Policy
Center for Law and Social Policy

11/21/2005 update: *the Senate did not ultimately accept this Amendment.*