Vision

Social Security is one of the most effective anti-poverty programs of all time, and has lifted 1.2 million children out of poverty. Social Security benefits are a crucial lifeline for millions of children. This includes children who receive survivor benefits from a parent through Old Age and Survivor's Insurance (OASI), those who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) due to a disability, and children who live in a household with a parent or other caregiver who receives Disability Insurance (DI) or another Social Security benefit. Almost seven million children in the United States benefit from OASI and DI, and an additional 1.3 million are covered by SSI. These crucial programs must be adequately funded, protected, and strengthened.

Recommended Administrative Actions

Ensure that all administrative actions prioritize children's needs. Any and all proposed rules that govern Social Security must seek to increase access to resources, information, and appropriate counsel for beneficiaries. The next administration must ensure that all proposed rules regarding eligibility and benefits for those receiving Social Security and SSI benefits are in the best interest of children receiving these benefits or who are in households receiving these benefits.

Recommended Congressional Actions

Protect Supplemental Security Income for children in need. Congress must reject proposals to eliminate or severely reduce SSI benefits for children. Numerous proposals have been furthered that seek to replace SSI benefits with “services” or other programs. Some proposals have sought to impose additional, cumbersome, or arbitrary requirements on children and families seeking these benefits. Children with disabilities require adequate financial resources to care for their needs, which are often extraordinarily expensive. In fact, families raising children with disabilities are more than twice as likely to face material hardships such as homelessness, food insecurity, and utility shutoff. It is crucial that these benefits be protected and maintained so they can support the children who need them.

Funding Priorities

Adequately fund the Social Security Administration. Currently, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is experiencing an historic administrative backlog and as a result, Americans are subject to soaring wait times due to the lack of funding for administrative support. More than 1.1 million people are waiting an average of over 550 days for a hearing on their Social Security or SSI benefits. These wait times are unacceptable and leave many individuals in extreme poverty with little to no resources or recourse. Congress must fully fund the necessary administrative budget in order to decrease wait times and reach Americans in need.

Ensure Trust Fund solvency. Congress must keep the Social Security Trust Funds solvent and not play politics with the benefits that people rightly deserve. Almost seven million children (6.8 million) children live in households receiving these benefits, and it is crucial that Congress find a way to maintain solvency without benefits cuts.

About this Document

This document is an excerpt from Blueprint for Children: How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future (http://aap.org/blueprint), which was produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics in September 2016 and has also been endorsed by the following organizations: the Academic Pediatric Association, the American Pediatric Society, America’s Promise Alliance, the Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, Family Voices, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the Pediatric Policy Council, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, the Society for Pediatric Research and ZERO TO THREE.