

July 31, 2024

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund, we write to urge you to vote for the bipartisan tax package, H.R. 7024 that expands the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to reach more lower-income families, including over 2.4 million children in our Deep South states. In addition, we are strongly opposed to any changes to H.R. 7024 that would take the expanded CTC away from families and request you oppose any changes that would undermine the CTC provisions in this package. The Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund has been a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. We focus on five states in the Deep South: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida.

Today around 12.4% of children in the U.S. live in poverty.¹ Parents living below the poverty line must make difficult choices every day about what to prioritize- food, rent, healthcare. Expanding access to opportunity and eliminating racial and economic inequality in all facets of life including education, employment, and public infrastructure and social supports is essential to SPLC's goal of eradicating poverty and expanding opportunity for all. We believe all people deserve an adequate standard of living that includes access to food and water, healthy housing, high-quality health care, free education, safe working conditions, fair wages, and government benefits to meet their basic needs.

We are writing to urge you to pass a tax package that expands the CTC to reach more lower-income families including over 2.4 million children in our states.² While the proposal is a temporary expansion that does not go as far as we would like, it would be an important and immediate step towards reducing child poverty and increasing income for families who are facing hardships. Many in our Deep South community are struggling to meet basic needs. SPLC's focus states have some of the highest child poverty rates and highest hunger rates in the country.³ We ask that you support moving the bipartisan tax package at the first opportunity so it can take effect this tax season. To help underscore the urgency, we want to make sure you have the latest data about poverty, hardship, and other measures for our state:

¹ See, U.S. CENSUS, Poverty in the United States, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2023/demo/p60-280.html>

² Kris Cox et al, "Low- Income Families Would Gain First year of Bipartisan Child Tax Credit Expansion, CENTER FOR BUDGET POLICY PRIORITIES, Jan. 22, 2024, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/about-16-million-children-in-low-income-families-would-gain-in-first-year-of>

³ See, U.S. CENSUS, Poverty in the United States: 2022, pg. 47, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2023/demo/p60-280.pdf>; U.S. CENSUS, U.S. Poverty Rates Varies by Age Group, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/12/poverty-rate-varies-by-age-groups.html>

- 22.1% of children in Alabama, 16.9 % of children in Florida, 16.4% of children in Georgia, 24.4 % of children in Louisiana, and 25.9% of children in Mississippi⁴ are in families below the federal poverty level, and many more are in families working hard to make ends meet. Child poverty increased after the expiration of the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit, and this package can help reverse that trend.
- The U.S. Census’s Household Pulse Survey data from prior months provides us with an understanding of how many people in our state do not always have enough to eat.⁵ From May 28- June 24, 2024, Nationally, 11.3% of adults reported there was either sometimes or often not enough to eat in the last 7 days. This is in contrast to 17.2% of adults Mississippi, 16.2% in Alabama, 13.7% in Florida, 13.0% in Louisiana and 12.0% in Georgia.
- In addition, the U.S. Census’s Household Pulse Survey data from the previous months provides us an understanding of how many people in our state are struggling to keep a roof over their heads⁶. Nationally, from February to June 2024, on average 31.4% of adults in households report they are not current on rent or mortgage where eviction or foreclosure in the next two months is either very likely or somewhat likely. During this time frame, at its peak, Mississippi reported 53.7% percent of adults in households experienced housing insecurity in April, Georgia reported 43.1% in May, Louisiana reported 39% in May, and Florida reported 17.7% in May.
- 19 million children nationwide, including over 2.9 million children in our states, do not receive the full credit (or any credit) because their families do not make enough money.⁷

Through our work with local communities in the Deep South, we know firsthand how critical the expansion of the CTC is for families who are most in need. The current CTC provides higher benefits to families earning \$400,000 per year than to families earning \$15,000. Most families that do not receive the full credit (or any credit) because their families do not make enough money have some paid income but are still left out of the full CTC. Historic racism and lack of opportunity result in nearly half of Black children, along with 4 in 10 American Indian/Alaska Native and more than 1 in 3 Latino children, getting less than the full credit or no CTC at all because their families’ incomes are too low.⁸ It is past time that Congress expands this critical benefit.

The proposed CTC expansion will reach 80% of those currently not getting the full CTC, and over 2.4 million children in our states will benefit from the expanded CTC.⁹ This will lift about 400,000 children above the federal poverty line for the 2023 tax year, rising to 500,000 in

⁴ KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION, Poverty Rate by Age, <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-age/>

⁵ U.S. CENSUS, Household Pulse Survey, Food Scarcity, <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=FOODSCARCE> (last accessed 7/30/2024)

⁶ U.S. CENSUS, Household Pulse Survey, Likelihood of Eviction or Foreclosure, <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=EVICTFOR>

⁷ Chuck Marr, “Child Tax Credit Expansion Should Prioritize Cutting Child Poverty,” CENTER FOR BUDGET POLICY PRIORITIES, Jan. 10, 2024, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/child-tax-credit-expansion-should-prioritize-cutting-child-poverty>

⁸ Kris Cox et al, “Low- Income Families Would Gain First year of Bipartisan Child Tax Credit Expansion, CENTER FOR BUDGET POLICY PRIORITIES, Jan. 22, 2024, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/about-16-million-children-in-low-income-families-would-gain-in-first-year-of>

⁹ *Id*

2025 nationwide. In particular, more than 1 in 3 of all Black and Latino children under 17, and 3 in 10 of all American Indian and Alaska Native children under 17, would benefit.¹⁰ This bipartisan CTC expansion would be an important—albeit incremental and temporary—step to shift tax policies and reduce poverty that we hope Congress will build on to bring full credit to all families in longer-term tax legislation.

We urge you to put the needs of people with the lowest incomes first by voting to enact the bipartisan tax package and work with colleagues and leadership to ensure that families in our community can get an expanded CTC.

Please feel free to reach out directly if you have any questions or concerns at theresa.lau@splcenter.org or (571) 609-1890.

Sincerely,



Theresa Lau

Senior Policy Counsel, Eradicating Poverty

¹⁰ *Id.*