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October 15, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of America's over 220 children's hospitals and the children they serve, we thank you for your efforts to provide key national investments to move us beyond the pandemic and come out stronger. The most important investments we can make in the future of our nation is in our children. Your Build Back Better Act, as drafted by the House, includes important, long sought-after policies supported by lawmakers across Congress from both parties designed to advance children's health care coverage, improve outcomes and address key social determinants of health. We applaud inclusion of these provisions and strongly encourage you to sustain and improve them in the final budget reconciliation agreement:

- **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) permanency will ensure access to health insurance coverage for the 9 million children and low-income pregnant women who rely on the program.** CHIP is a highly successful program with bipartisan support from its inception. It has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of uninsured children.
- **12-month continuous Medicaid and CHIP eligibility for children and maternal health improvements will provide stable coverage to children and pregnant women who will otherwise experience gaps in coverage.** Together, Medicaid and CHIP provide coverage to 46 million children and as we look to the end of the public health emergency, the continuous eligibility policy will ensure that these children are not unnecessarily dropped from these programs. We also strongly support the inclusion of 12-months continuous eligibility for pregnant women and coverage for 12 months postpartum to safeguard the health of both mothers and children.
- **The mental health funding provided for children is a great start, but more needs to be done now to address this crisis.** The challenges of the pandemic have exacerbated an already existing crisis in children's behavioral health. Quite simply, the need for services and supports in our nation far outweighs the capacity to provide care. The additional funding currently included in the Build Back Better Act for Project AWARE and National Child Traumatic Stress Network is critical and should improve children's access to behavioral health screening and services, but the work cannot stop there. Earlier this year, the Children's Hospital Association and its members shared a bold plan for addressing the spectrum of mental health needs of our nation's children. Now is the time for you and Congress to make an investment in our future and significantly expand America's pediatric mental health care capacity and to better serve our children. We urge you to include the provisions of [H.R. 4944, the Helping Kids Cope Act](#), in any final Build Back Better package, which would provide \$3 billion in funding to facilitate the expansion of community-based mental health services and support training for pediatric mental health professionals.

*Champions for Children's Health*

- **It is essential that children's hospitals are directly included in any support for hospital infrastructure within the Build Back Better package.** Children's hospitals are the nation's health care safety net for all kids, providing nearly all specialized care for children. Many children's hospitals have not yet recovered from significant financial damage experienced early in the pandemic, weakening the pediatric health care system's preparedness. In recent weeks, an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in children, an atypical early onset of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and an ongoing crisis in children's mental health have further strained pediatric care capacity.
- **Additional funding for the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program is a critical first step in addressing the disparity in federal support for the pediatric workforce, especially during this critical time.** The CHGME program supports the training of 7,000 pediatric residents annually at children's hospitals. Including an increase of at least \$250 million for CHGME in the Build Back Better package will strengthen and grow the pediatric workforce and improve access to care for children. We ask you to sustain this increase and press for additional funding for CHGME to meet children's needs and reduce the long-standing and growing gap between federal investment in physician training for adults compared to children. This investment is even more urgent now as we respond to the spread of COVID-19 within our communities and a worsening mental, emotional and behavioral health crisis among children and adolescents.
- **Investments to address social determinants of health will support the best future for our nation's children.** We support the many provisions in Build Back Better that will reduce child poverty and give kids a healthy start in life, such as the extending the Child Tax Credit, expanding access to child care and early learning programs, and providing family and medical leave.

The Build Back Better Act is focused on human infrastructure, and we believe our kids are the nation's most important infrastructure. Please keep them as a top priority as this package moves forward.

Thank you for everything you are doing, and with very best wishes,



Mark Wietecha  
Chief Executive Officer  
Children's Hospital Association