

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/08/us-should-keep-millions-children-out-poverty>

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Expand the Child Tax Credit

jobeckerhrw

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The United States Congress is debating the content and price tag of the [Build Back Better Act](#), President Joe Bidens proposal to invest \$3.5 trillion over 10 years in education, fighting climate change, and strengthening the US social safety net.

But programs to reduce inequality and child poverty should not be on the chopping block.

As part of Covid-19 relief efforts, Congress enacted a temporary child tax credit for 2021, providing most families in the US with monthly payments of \$350 per child under age 6, and \$300 per month for each child between 6 and 18. Already, the program has had extraordinary impact. A new Columbia University [study](#) found that the payments have lifted three million children out of poverty, and the number of families reporting food insecurity has dropped by a third. Most families [report](#) using the payments for basic needs, including food, housing, childrens clothing, and other essentials, as well as saving for emergencies.

But the child tax credit is [under fire](#), with proposals to cut the benefits, or reduce the number of those eligible, including those families that need it most.

Childrens right to an adequate standard of living is well established under international human rights law. All children should be able to live in dignity and have their basic needs met.

Child stipends also are one of the best investments governments can make. Their long-term impact is to increase childrens earning potential, improve their health, their education, and reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system and reliance on social services. Columbias [Center on Poverty and Social Policy](#) estimates that making the child tax credit permanent would cost \$100 billion per year, but yield \$800 billion annually in societal benefits. It could cut child poverty in the US by [40 percent](#), with the greatest benefit for children of color, who are more likely to live in poverty.

Congress should ensure critical social safety nets for the lowest-income and most marginalized households. By making the child tax credit permanent, the US government has the chance to transform millions of childrens lives, now and in the future. It should seize the opportunity.

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