



For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Sarah Cherin, Advocacy and Legislative Relations, (206) 324-0340 x15, cell: (206) 854-2126,
sarah@childrensalliance.org

Ruth Schubert, Communications Manager, (206) 324-0340 x 18, cell: (206) 498-0185,
ruth@childrensalliance.org

Children absent from Senate budget *Supports for foster children left out*

February 26, 2008 (Seattle)—The Senate budget released today leaves out many children's needs. The Children's Alliance is especially disappointed that critical investments in foster care included in the House budget released last week are absent from the Senate's version.

"Children in foster care have been waiting for a long time," said Paola Maranan, executive director of the Children's Alliance. "How many children need to age out of the system before we start getting foster kids the support they need?"

Several items in the House budget should be included in the final budget: \$812,000 for Comprehensive Health and Education Tracking (CHET) screens, \$655,000 for Foster Youth education and \$884,000 to expedite essential 30 day visitation.

The Senate budget also fails to follow through on commitments to make sure every child can get quality health care, to feed hungry kids where they learn and play, and offer children and families early learning opportunities that prepare them for school and life.

In health care, the budget lacks investments that will ensure that children can get quality care from doctors they trust.

The Senate budget also failed to include funds that would eliminate the school lunch co-pay for children pre-K and 4-12 grades. This is an opportunity not only to improve nutrition for low-income students, but to increase federal nutrition funds to our schools. Last year, legislators eliminated the co-pay children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. A modest investment of \$4 million would eliminate the co-pay for pre-K and grades 4 through 12, ensuring that all school children can get two solid meals per day.

The Senate budget does, however, invest \$1,100,000 to raise the income limit for food stamps, improving access to benefits for thousands of low-income families who currently struggle to put food on the table.

As in the House budget, Senators left out home visiting programs, which offer support to parents as their children's first teachers. An investment of \$5 million now would pay off in the future and address an unmet need in our state.

"We urge legislators to keep children in mind as they finalize this budget," Maranan said. "With greater economic uncertainty on the horizon, we urge legislators to make investments in children that will bolster the well-being of families in Washington state."

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About the Children's Alliance

At the Children's Alliance we're advocates for kids. We protect kids by changing laws. We serve kids by making sure programs and policies work. We put kids first by securing resources. We advocate for kids by holding lawmakers accountable. For to learn more about the Children's Alliance, go to:

www.childrensalliance.org