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Connecticut’s share of the state budget devoted to children hits a record low
Report finds steep declines in funding for education and early care

NEW HAVEN – Connecticut’s high quality of life, world-class workforce, and rich economy are the result of long-standing investments in children and families. According to Connecticut Voices for Children, these smart investments are in jeopardy. A new report finds that the share of the state budget devoted to children has reached a record low, down to 29.5 percent of overall spending. The report’s findings will be presented tomorrow morning at the Capitol during Connecticut Voices for Children’s 16th annual Budget Forum.

Although absolute spending in the Children’s Budget has risen modestly since 2008 (by $269.1 million or 4.5 percent in 2017 dollars), the increase in spending in other budget areas has outpaced investments in children. Cuts to critical line items last year exacerbated the relative decline with spending reductions totaling $81.2 million in FY 2017, falling most heavily on investments in education, early care, and programs that serve as alternatives to youth incarceration. Higher education experienced the highest percentage point decline and K-12 education the largest cut in absolute dollars. Investments in children declined not only as a share of the budget but also as a share of the overall economy, falling from a high of 2.8 percent of personal income in 2009 to 2.4 percent this fiscal year.

“Looking ahead to the coming legislative session, the budget promises to pose new challenges as projected deficits total more than $3 billion,” says Derek Thomas, Fiscal Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children. “We call for a balanced approach to closing the budget gap, so as to avoid the kind of reactive cuts today which will actually increase costs tomorrow. Lawmakers should be careful to protect and improve investments in child and family well-being and avoid last year’s cuts-only approach.”

The report warns that in a scenario of further budget cuts with no new revenue, the Children’s Budget could experience a cut of more than $631 million next fiscal year. To avoid further cuts, Connecticut Voices for Children advocates for the adoption of a balanced budget approach that combines investments in children and families with new revenue, not relying solely on cuts that would endanger future growth.

“The budget deficit we face results from decades of denial – the refusal to account for the long-term impact of questionable budget practices,” says Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director at Connecticut Voices for Children. “It is time for the state to embrace a strategic budget framework one that makes smart investments to help advance a more inclusive, shared prosperity in the decades ahead.”
About Connecticut Voices for Children:

Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based policy think tank based in New Haven, Connecticut. Our mission is to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut’s young people and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies. To achieve these objectives, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.