



April 20, 2021

To the Washington and Oregon Congressional delegations and Congressional leaders:

As advocates for Pacific Northwesterners to be able to house, feed, educate and care for ourselves and each other, we urge our federal representatives to fund **a permanent, improved version of a monthly per-child cash payment** that is getting a one-year trial run in the American Rescue Plan.

Here in Washington as elsewhere, a simple per-child cash payment would be:

- **A historic expansion of the safety net for kids.** At full uptake, a per-child monthly payment of \$250 (for example) would send a total of \$921 million annually to the households of 197,000 Washingtonian children and 110,000 Oregonian children who live in poverty. Unlike the previous, regressive federal child tax credit, this direct payment would lift many thousands of Washingtonian children out of deep poverty in addition to helping middle-income families.
- **Similar to successful programs in other countries.** For many years, the United States has had [one of the rich world's highest child poverty rates](#), in part because it dedicates less of its economy to social expenditures on families than any OECD country except Turkey. [No OECD country \(out of 35\) gives less cash to families as a share of its economy](#). In absolute dollar terms, these proposals would give American children a [cash benefit in the middle of the pack](#): smaller than in Canada or Germany, larger than in the Netherlands or Norway.
- **Well-proportioned to the cost of housing a child.** According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, [additional housing space is the single largest cost of parenting](#), amounting to an average of \$263-\$280 per child per month for families at or below \$59,000 income.
- **Universal.** Requiring poor people to produce paperwork proving their worthiness is not, in our opinion, an effective antipoverty strategy. The strongest public programs are easy to access. Progressive taxation is a better "means test" than rationing our public programs.
- **Maximally flexible and targeted to each household's needs.** Cash payments let recipients prioritize a transit pass, car repair, childcare, medical care or whatever they may need most in a given month. Similarly, cash payments can help tenants save for a home purchase or help low-income homeowners pay a mortgage. A large body of evidence finds that [cash payments in childhood have deep and long-lasting benefits](#) to children whose families receive them.

Without endorsing any particular revenue proposal, we are coming together to urge our representatives to use progressive tax policy to create permanent funding for such a payment. It would be a cornerstone of a healthy, just society in the Pacific Northwest and across the United States.

Washington-based signers

Chief Seattle Club
Children's Alliance Washington
Economic Opportunity Institute
Fuse Washington
MomsRising
Washington Budget and Policy Center
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
Sightline Institute

Oregon-based signers

Community Alliance of Tenants
Business for a Better Portland
The Street Trust
Oregon Education Association
Our Children Oregon
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Multnomah County Commissioner
Jessica Vega Pederson