



# children's defense fund ohio

\*\*\*For Immediate Release \*\*\*

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## Ohio organizations predict surge in child welfare referrals as Ohio reopens, urge Congress to provide relief

*Statewide child welfare and advocacy organizations call for Congress to strengthen systems to protect children by requesting emergency funding in the next COVID-19 relief package.*

**COLUMBUS** — Statewide child welfare and advocacy organizations issued a letter of support to Ohio's congressional delegation calling for emergency relief for state and local child welfare agencies in advance of a predicted surge of referrals. The child welfare system benefited from much needed increases in funding in the current state budget and those increases may be in jeopardy given the state's economic downturn. The predicted surge in referrals and the need for federal relief becomes even more critical as the state of Ohio announced \$775 million in budget cuts this week to state agencies and programs.

The letter details the challenges Ohio families and systems face during the pandemic, and the likelihood of a surge. The impacts of COVID-19 are putting stress on families who are attempting to navigate new public health safety protocols, school closures, uncertain childcare arrangements, job losses, social isolation, and significant barriers to many critical support services.

As parents are home more with their children, frustrations can flare. The parent helpline, 1-800-4-A-CHILD saw a 31% increase in calls since the beginning of the order. Though reports of child abuse are down because fewer mandated reporters are seeing children, some physicians are reporting increased child injuries. We know that as Ohio slowly reopens, and especially when schools reopen, we will see a "surge" in referrals to children services agencies. We need to make sure that the agencies are equipped and able to handle this surge.

The following organizations support this proposal, which is part of a national campaign joined by 600 national, state, and local organizations in signing similar letters urging Congress to act swiftly to support our children and families: The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, Public Children's Services Association of Ohio, The Ohio Children's Alliance, Providence House, Ashtabula County Children Services Board, Advocates for Ohio's Future, Muskingum County Adult and Child Protective Services, Trumbull County Children Services, Schubert Center for Child Studies at CWRU, Columbiana County DJFS, Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services, and Wayne County Children Services Board.

Angela Sausser, Executive Director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) explained, “We know that as Ohio slowly reopens, and especially when schools reopen, we will see a surge in referrals to children services agencies. We need to ensure that our county agencies can meet the demand for services for these vulnerable children and families.”

The emergency aid would provide an estimated \$100 million in federal funding to Ohio’s local system for programs like Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grants, Kinship Navigator Programs, among others.

The full statements can be found here:

[U.S. Senate](#)

[U.S. House of Representatives](#)

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### **About Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio**

The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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