

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2715

To develop and implement policies to advance early childhood development, to provide assistance for orphans and other vulnerable children in developing countries, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 29, 2019

Mr. BLUNT (for himself and Mr. COONS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To develop and implement policies to advance early childhood development, to provide assistance for orphans and other vulnerable children in developing countries, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Global Child Thrive
5 Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to a 2019 report from the United
 2 Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Es-
 3 timation entitled “Levels & Trends in Child Mor-
 4 tality,” the total number of deaths among children
 5 younger than 15 years of age dropped by 56 percent
 6 between 1990 and 2018, from approximately
 7 14,200,000 to approximately 6,200,000.

8 (2) According to a 2016 article published in
 9 The Lancet entitled “Early childhood development:
 10 the foundation of sustainable development”—

11 (A) an estimated 250,000,000 children in
 12 low-income and middle-income countries suffer
 13 suboptimal development due to poverty and
 14 stunting alone; and

15 (B) children who do not meet develop-
 16 mental milestones are expected to lose about 25
 17 percent of their average yearly income once
 18 they become adults.

19 (3) According to a report from the United Na-
 20 tions Children’s Fund (UNICEF), entitled “The
 21 State of the World’s Children 2016: A fair chance
 22 for every child”, nearly 250,000,000 of the world’s
 23 650,000,000 primary school age children do not
 24 master basic literacy and numeracy.

(4) According to a 2018 report from the World Health Organization entitled “Nurturing Care for early childhood development”—

(A) the environment in which a child grows has a profound impact on future learning, behavior, and health; and

(B) a country’s economic diversity and growth could be improved by investment in early childhood development.

(5) According to a 2017 UNICEF report entitled “UNICEF’s Programme Guidance for Early Childhood Development”, nurturing care, which is key to early childhood development, consists of a core set of interrelated components, including—

(A) behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge about caregiving, including health, hygiene care, and feeding;

(B) stimulation, such as talking, singing, and playing;

(C) responsiveness, such as early bonding, secure attachment, trust, and sensitive communication; and

(D) safety, including routines, protection from violence, abuse, neglect, harm, and environmental pollution.

1 (6) According to a 2016 report published in
2 The Lancet entitled “Advancing Early Childhood
3 Development: From Science to Scale”—

4 (A) nurturing care from parents, relatives,
5 and other caregivers and services are formative
6 experiences for young children;

7 (B) programs promoting nurturing care
8 can improve early childhood development out-
9 comes; and

10 (C) children who do not receive nurturing
11 care display negative development outcomes,
12 such as greater sensitivity to the effects of
13 stress or behavioral problems, especially chil-
14 dren who do not receive nurturing care before
15 their second birthday.

16 (7) According to the “United States Govern-
17 ment Action Plan on Children in Adversity, A
18 Framework for International Assistance: 2012–
19 2017,” children who live without protective family
20 care, in abusive households, on the streets, or in in-
21 stitutions, or who are trafficked, are participating in
22 armed groups, or are being exploited for their labor
23 are more likely to be exposed to violence, exploi-
24 tation, abuse, and neglect.

1 (8) According to a 2017 UNICEF report enti-
 2 tled “Early Moments Matter for every child”, vio-
 3 lence, abuse, neglect, and traumatic experiences
 4 produce toxic stress that limits neural connectivity
 5 in developing brains.

6 (9) According to a 2014 working paper from
 7 the National Scientific Council on the Developing
 8 Child at Harvard University entitled “Excessive
 9 Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing
 10 Brain”—

11 (A) situations that produce toxic stress in-
 12 crease the production of cortisol in a child’s
 13 brain, which disrupts its healthy development;
 14 and

15 (B) chronic stress can potentially affect
 16 the expression of genes that regulate the stress
 17 response across the life course.

18 (10) According to a 2018 article in the North
 19 Carolina Medical Journal entitled “Adverse Child-
 20 hood Experiences (ACEs): An Important Element of
 21 a Comprehensive Approach to the Opioid Crisis”,
 22 adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic
 23 or stressful experiences, including emotional, phys-
 24 ical, or sexual abuse, domestic violence, household
 25 substance abuse, household mental illness, parental

1 separation or divorce, and the incarceration of a
 2 household family member.

3 (11) According to a 2016 report in Develop-
 4 ment and Psychopathology entitled “Childhood Ad-
 5 versity and Epigenetic Regulation of Glucocorticoid
 6 Signaling Genes: Associations in Children and
 7 Adults”—

8 (A) children and adults are at risk of de-
 9 veloping psychiatric disorders and other medical
 10 conditions if they have had an adverse child-
 11 hood experience (ACE); and

12 (B) adults who have had numerous ACEs
 13 die nearly 20 years earlier, on average, than
 14 adults who have not had numerous ACEs.

15 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

16 It is the sense of Congress that—

17 (1) it is time to build on the reduction in pre-
 18 ventable child deaths worldwide achieved by focusing
 19 new efforts and attention on—

20 (A) saving children’s lives; and

21 (B) supporting the healthy development of
 22 children’s brains;

23 (2) methods of delivering parent training and
 24 education on nurturing care, such as the Center for
 25 Disease Control and Prevention’s Maternal, Infant,

1 and Early Childhood Home Visiting programs, could
 2 help other countries realize greater gains in early
 3 childhood development;

4 (3) negative early childhood experiences can ob-
 5 struct lifelong health and opportunity;

6 (4) well-developed and inquisitive children are
 7 the global leaders of tomorrow;

8 (5) countries will only be able to reach and ex-
 9 ceed their development goals if their youngest chil-
 10 dren get a strong start; and

11 (6) focused cross-sectoral coordination for pro-
 12 moting early childhood development is essential for
 13 the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of all
 14 early childhood development initiatives.

15 **SEC. 4. ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD OUT-**
 16 **COMES GLOBALLY.**

17 Chapter 1 of part I of the Foreign Assistance Act
 18 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) is amended—

19 (1) in section 135(f)(1) (22 U.S.C.
 20 2152f(f)(1)), by striking “2006 and 2007” and in-
 21 serting “2020 through 2025”; and

22 (2) by adding at the end the following:

23 **“SEC. 137. ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD**
 24 **OUTCOMES GLOBALLY.**

25 **“(a) DEFINITIONS.—**In this section:

1 “(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees’ means—

4 “(A) the Committee on Appropriations of
5 the Senate;

6 “(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations
7 of the Senate;

8 “(C) the Committee on Appropriations of
9 the House of Representatives; and

10 “(D) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
11 the House of Representatives.

12 “(2) CHILDREN.—The term ‘children’ means
13 persons who are younger than 18 years of age.

14 “(3) DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION.—The term
15 ‘deinstitutionalization’ means the process of
16 transitioning from a child care protection system
17 that relies on residential care to a system that pri-
18 marily supports family-based care.

19 “(4) EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.—The
20 term ‘early childhood development’ means the devel-
21 opment and learning of a child younger than 8 years
22 of age, including physical, cognitive, social, and emo-
23 tional development and approaches to learning that
24 allow a child to reach his or her full developmental
25 potential.

1 “(5) EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRO-
 2 GRAM.—The term ‘early childhood development pro-
 3 gram’ means a program that ensures that every
 4 child has the conditions for healthy growth, nur-
 5 turing family-based care, development and learning,
 6 and protection from violence, exploitation, abuse,
 7 and neglect, including—

8 “(A) a health, clean water, sanitation, and
 9 hygiene program that serves pregnant women,
 10 children younger than 5 years of age, and the
 11 parents of such children;

12 “(B) a nutrition program, combined with
 13 stimulating child development activity;

14 “(C) age appropriate cognitive stimulation,
 15 especially for newborns, infants, and toddlers,
 16 including an early childhood intervention pro-
 17 gram for children experiencing at-risk situa-
 18 tions, developmental delays, disabilities, and be-
 19 havioral and mental health conditions;

20 “(D) an early learning (36 months and
 21 younger), preschool, and basic education pro-
 22 gram for children until they reach 8 years of
 23 age or complete primary school; and

24 “(E) a child protection program, with an
 25 emphasis on the promotion of permanent, safe,

1 and nurturing families, rather than placement
 2 in residential care or institutions, including for
 3 children with disabilities.

4 “(6) INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOP-
 5 MENT.—The term ‘inclusive early childhood develop-
 6 ment’ means the full and effective participation, ac-
 7 cessibility, attendance, and achievement of all chil-
 8 dren, especially children who are excluded or at risk
 9 of being marginalized, such as children with disabil-
 10 ities.

11 “(7) RELEVANT EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES
 12 AND OFFICIALS.—The term ‘relevant Executive
 13 branch agencies and officials’ means—

14 “(A) the Department of State;

15 “(B) the United States Agency for Inter-
 16 national Development;

17 “(C) the Department of the Treasury;

18 “(D) the Department of Labor;

19 “(E) the Department of Education;

20 “(F) the Department of Agriculture;

21 “(G) the Department of Defense;

22 “(H) the Department of Health and
 23 Human Services, including—

24 “(i) the Centers for Disease Control
 25 and Prevention; and

1 “(ii) the National Institutes of
2 Health;

3 “(I) the Office of the Global AIDS Coordi-
4 nator;

5 “(J) the Chief Executive Officer of the
6 Millennium Challenge Corporation;

7 “(K) the National Security Advisor; and

8 “(L) the Director of the Peace Corps.

9 “(8) RESIDENTIAL CARE.—The term ‘residen-
10 tial care’ means care provided in any nonfamily-
11 based group setting, including orphanages, transit or
12 interim care centers, children’s homes, children’s vil-
13 lages or cottage complexes, group homes, and board-
14 ing schools used primarily for care purposes as an
15 alternative to a children’s home.

16 “(b) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the
17 United States—

18 “(1) to support early childhood development in
19 all child-focused international assistance programs,
20 in partnership with affected countries, other donor
21 country governments, international financial institu-
22 tions, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based
23 organizations, international organizations, multilat-
24 eral organizations, and the private sector; and

1 “(2) to encourage partner countries to lead
 2 early childhood development initiatives that include
 3 incentives for building local capacity for sustainable
 4 implementation by—

5 “(A) scaling up the most effective, evi-
 6 dence-based, national interventions, including
 7 for the most vulnerable populations and chil-
 8 dren with disabilities and developmental delays,
 9 with a focus on adaptation to country re-
 10 sources, cultures, and languages;

11 “(B) designing, implementing, monitoring,
 12 and evaluating programs in a way that en-
 13 hances their quality, transparency, equity, and
 14 accountability, increases sustainability, and im-
 15 proves child and family outcomes in partner
 16 countries; and

17 “(C) utilizing and expanding innovative
 18 public-private financing mechanisms.

19 “(c) IMPLEMENTATION.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
 21 the date of the enactment of the Global Child Thrive
 22 Act of 2019, the Administrator of the United States
 23 Agency for International Development, on behalf of
 24 the President, shall direct relevant Executive branch
 25 agencies and officials supporting young children—

1 “(A) to incorporate early childhood devel-
 2 opment into current programming to be carried
 3 out during the following 5 fiscal years; and

4 “(B) to promote inclusive early childhood
 5 development in partner countries.

6 “(2) ELEMENTS.—In carrying out paragraph
 7 (1), the Administrator and relevant Executive
 8 branch agencies and officials shall—

9 “(A) build on the evidence and priorities
 10 outlined in ‘Advancing Protection and Care for
 11 Children in Adversity: A U.S. Government
 12 Strategy for International Assistance 2019–
 13 2023’, published in June 2019 (referred to in
 14 this section as ‘APCCA’);

15 “(B) to the extent practicable, identify evi-
 16 dence-based strategic priorities, indicators, out-
 17 comes, and targets, particularly emphasizing
 18 the most vulnerable populations and children
 19 with disabilities and developmental delays, to
 20 support inclusive early childhood development;

21 “(C) support the design, implementation,
 22 and evaluation of pilot projects in partner coun-
 23 tries, with the goal of taking such projects to
 24 scale;

1 “(D) support inclusive early childhood de-
2 velopment by supporting bureaus, working
3 groups, and task forces implementing relevant
4 sector strategies and public laws, including—

5 “(i) the Global Water Strategy re-
6 quired under section 136(j) of the Foreign
7 Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C.
8 2152h(j));

9 “(ii) the whole-of-government strategy
10 required under section 5 of the Global
11 Food Security Act of 2016 (22 U.S.C.
12 9304 note);

13 “(iii) the Basic Education Strategy
14 set forth in section 105(c) of the Foreign
15 Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C.
16 2151c(c));

17 “(iv) the U.S. Government Global Nu-
18 trition Coordination Plan 2016–2021; and

19 “(v) APCCA;

20 “(E) focus on improving coordination with
21 foreign governments and international and re-
22 gional organizations with respect to official
23 country policies and plans for early childhood
24 development, maternal, newborn, and child
25 health and nutrition care, basic education plans,

1 water, sanitation and hygiene, and child protec-
 2 tion plans;

3 “(F) support strategies that—

4 “(i) enable parents to care for their
 5 children;

6 “(ii) prevent unnecessary family-child
 7 separation;

8 “(iii) assist families with children with
 9 disabilities;

10 “(iv) assist countries in planning and
 11 implementing deinstitutionalization pro-
 12 grams; and

13 “(v) promote nurturing, appropriate,
 14 protective, and permanent family care,
 15 while reducing the percentage of children
 16 living in residential care or on the street;
 17 and

18 “(G) consult with governments, inter-
 19 national financial institutions, nongovernmental
 20 organizations, local and international civil soci-
 21 ety groups, multilateral organizations, the pri-
 22 vate sector, faith-based organizations, commu-
 23 nity-based organizations, organizations run by
 24 people with disabilities, and early childhood net-

1 works academic and professional associations,
2 and local field workers, as appropriate.

3 “(d) ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
4 THE STRATEGY.—The Special Adviser for Children in Ad-
5 versity shall include, in the annual report required under
6 section 5 of the Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulner-
7 able Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 (22
8 U.S.C. 2152g), which shall be submitted to the appro-
9 priate congressional committees and made available to the
10 public, a description of—

11 “(1) the progress made toward integrating early
12 childhood development interventions into current
13 programming;

14 “(2) the efforts made by relevant Executive
15 branch agencies and officials to implement sub-
16 section (c), with a particular focus on the activities
17 described in such subsection;

18 “(3) the progress achieved during the reporting
19 period toward meeting the goals, objectives, bench-
20 marks, and timeframes described in subsection (c);
21 and

22 “(4) the progress achieved during the reporting
23 period toward meeting the goals, objectives, bench-
24 marks, and timeframes described in subsection (c) at
25 the program level, along with specific challenges or

1 gaps that may require shifts in targeting, financing,
2 or timeframes in the following fiscal year.

3 “(e) INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.—The Special Advi-
4 sor for Children in Adversity shall regularly convene an
5 interagency task force, which should—

6 “(1) provide intergovernmental and interagency
7 coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
8 of the activities carried out pursuant to this Act;

9 “(2) promote coordination on early childhood
10 development initiatives that include children with a
11 variety of needs and circumstances; and

12 “(3) establish a coordination mechanism within
13 United States Agency for International Development
14 to oversee and coordinate United States Government
15 Early Childhood Development programs, strategies,
16 and partnerships across Federal departments and
17 agencies.”.

18 **SEC. 5. SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR ASSISTANCE TO ORPHANS**

19 **AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN.**

20 Section 135(e)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of
21 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2152f(e)(2)) is amended—

22 (1) by amending subparagraph (A) to read as
23 follows:

1 “(A) Coordinate assistance to orphans and
2 other vulnerable children among the relevant
3 Executive branch agencies and officials.”; and
4 (2) in subparagraph (B), by striking “the var-
5 ious offices, bureaus, and field missions within the
6 United States Agency for International Develop-
7 ment” and inserting “the relevant Executive branch
8 agencies and officials, partner governments, multi-
9 lateral institutions, the private sector, and non-
10 governmental and civil society organizations”.

11 **SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

12 Nothing in the amendments made by sections 4 and
13 5 may be construed to restrict or abrogate any other au-
14 thorization for United States Agency for International De-
15 velopment activities or programs.

○