

# Action Sheet

AUGUST 2020

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*Almighty God, we pray that in these times of unprecedented need, we might use our voices to amplify the needs of those whose voices, due to circumstance, often go unheard. We pray that the leaders in our country prioritize both the local and global needs of vulnerable children and that we strive alongside them to further educate those around us on these needs.*

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## ACTIONS

To continue advancing the Global Child Thrive Act this 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, our Action Sheet action this month will be to write a Letter to the Editor asking our U.S. Senators to support and co-sponsor the Global Child Thrive Act (S. 2715). If a senator is already a cosponsor, thank them and urge them to take the next step in advancing the bill by asking Senate leadership to support taking up and passing the bill by the full Senate. If one Senator is a co-sponsor and the other is not, thank the co-sponsor by name and urge the action above. Then ask the other senator by name to cosponsor the bill.

**Congressional August recess has begun**, which means members of Congress and their staff are focused on connecting with constituents back home. We urge Chapter congressional liaisons to finalize coordination with congressional offices for virtual meetings with the chapter. Note: It's no problem if your meetings extend into September if you have not finalized dates.

## LASER TALK

More than half of the world's estimated 26 million refugees are children. Globally, the number of children who face a lifetime of developmental challenges caused by malnutrition exceeds 149 million—more than twice the total number of children in the United States. According to the World Food Program, COVID-19 may push an additional 10 million children into acute malnutrition.

The good news is that since 1990, U.S. international aid has saved nearly 100 million children. But children need to do more than survive; they need to thrive. That's why investing in Early Childhood Development, or ECD, is so important. Singing, reading and playing with colorful objects stimulates young minds, but the U.S. government doesn't integrate ECD activities into international programs for children. Our faith compels us to care for all life which means giving each child a strong foundation from which to reach their God-given potential.

Will you join Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Blunt (R-MO), lead sponsors of S. 2715, in cosponsoring the Global Child Thrive Act, directing the administration to integrate ECD activities into international child-focused programs? Passage would greatly mitigate the impact of future pandemics and disasters on the poorest families.

## BACKGROUND

COVID-19 continues to devastate families and communities everywhere. While needs increase in the United States, we must also be deeply concerned about the impact around the world. Fragile or non-existent health systems often mean families face daunting barriers to basic care. With your support, and that of the U.S. Catholic community, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partners are working tirelessly to respond to COVID-19, focusing on supporting high risk populations like vulnerable children.

**Hunger, Malnutrition and the Global Child Thrive Act:** According to UNICEF (2020), “between a quarter and a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted or wasted – too short or too thin,” in 2019. Malnutrition, which stunts children’s growth and impairs their cognitive and physical development, is the underlying cause of 45 percent of all preventable deaths worldwide of children under five, according to UNICEF (2019). Therefore, to address global hunger, we must address malnutrition and that is best done by incorporating Early Childhood Development (ECD) activities. It is not enough for children to simply have access to food; they need regular access to nutritious food with sufficient vitamins, minerals and protein. When combined with nurturing care, a cornerstone for ECD, children are able to absorb key nutrients better and more fully develop. In fact, this combination of good nutrition and ECD activities, such using mealtime as a place to bond with children, has a far greater positive impact than good nutrition alone. Incorporating ECD activities into U.S. government-funded food security and nutrition programs would multiply positive outcomes for children. During this time of COVID-19, the integration of ECD is more important than ever because it will support children’s holistic well-being and strengthen the foundation of their development, lessening the worst impacts of the pandemic.

The Global Child Thrive Act would integrate Early Childhood Development (ECD) into development and humanitarian programs serving vulnerable children and their families without requiring additional federal funding. It would help children recover from the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and build their resilience to future emergencies and trauma. Moreover, the holistic nature of the bill means it connects to many aspects of care for children. For example, it promotes access to clean water and hygiene practices at home, which are primary tools in stopping the spread of COVID-19. It elevates the necessity of providing safe, family-based care for children, including for those who are at risk of losing parental care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, it promotes psychosocial support and positive reinforcement, which will be crucial for young children experiencing the loss of a parent, isolation at home due to quarantines, malnutrition and magnified economic household stress, which are expected to increase as a result of this pandemic.

Want to learn more about hunger and nutrition? Our [Lead the Way playlist](#) is featuring a [Good Nutrition Video](#) ([Spanish link](#)).

## TAKE ACTION: Write a Letter to the Editor Focused on Your U.S. Senators

- 1. Find the local newspaper you will write to:** To learn what is required for letters to the editor, Google the following: “(Name of the paper) letters to the editor guidelines.” Identify the word limit and submission method (i.e., on the website or via email).
- 2. Think about the placement of the piece:** If you are writing to a larger newspaper, find an article or editorial that provides an entry point to discuss the need to care for vulnerable children amidst this pandemic. If you are writing to a smaller local paper, clearly articulate to the local readers why they too should care about this issue.
- 3. Research:** Read a few letters to the editor in the newspaper you are targeting to see how they begin and the general tone.
- 4. Write your letter:** Using the newspaper’s guidelines and this Action Sheet’s information, share what values or experiences move you to work to support the world’s most vulnerable children and have another chapter member provide some edits for your letter. **For additional support, check out these trainings:** [February 2020 \(36:28-53:40\)](#) or [October 2019 \(38:13-57:35\)](#).
- 5. Make sure to include the ask:** Express gratitude for Congress’ action to help address the needs of people most vulnerable in the U.S. and around the world amidst this pandemic and urge readers to ask their U.S. senators to champion the Global Child Thrive Act, S. 2715. When focusing attention on senators that have **not cosponsored**, ask them specifically to cosponsor and support this bill. When focusing attention on [senators who have cosponsored](#), **thank them** and urge them **to take the next step in advancing the bill by asking Senate leadership to support taking up and passing the bill by the full Senate**.  
**Note:** We anticipate S. 2715 to be passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) in early August. We will provide additional updates on the latest status of the bill on our August National Conference Call.
- 6. Report back and celebrate:** If your letter is published, contact your CRS representative. Share it on social media, tagging the office. Send it to your members of Congress! If it’s not published, consider sending it to another newspaper.