

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

CHILD POVERTY

File child poverty

November 18, 1999

TO: David Beier, Chief Domestic Policy Advisor, Office of the Vice President
FROM: Larry Aber and Julian Palmer, National center for Children in Poverty
RE: Feedback on Vice-President Gore's Policy Proposals Related to Child Poverty

It was a pleasure to meet with you and to discuss child poverty and some of the strategies that could be used to address it. We appreciate your interest in the issue and in the work of the National Center for Children in Poverty. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about the admittedly voluminous materials we left with you.

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the materials that you provided to us and their relationship to our framework for investing in families and reducing child poverty. The materials brought the Vice-President's extensive record in this area into clearer focus and highlighted a number of new steps that he would take if elected President. The themes of strengthening families; promoting responsible fatherhood; and closing gaps in the areas of opportunity, innovation, and income; each reflect important issue areas that Vice-President Gore is well-positioned to address as a public official and as a leading presidential candidate. Rather than attempt a detailed, point-by-point analysis of each of the statements and issue papers that you gave us, we will give our general reaction to the extensive materials you provided along with a pledge that we would be happy to reply in more depth to any follow up questions you may have.

With specific reference to our five column framework that includes strategies to: 1) increase family income, 2) reduce family expenses, 3) expand opportunity, 4) build knowledge and skills, and 5) promote stronger families/parental responsibility, we agree with your comment that many of the Vice-President's proposals fit cleanly into that framework. *Indeed, the Vice-President has endorsed initiatives in each of the five columns.* The materials you gave us were particularly strong in addressing issues in the forth and fifth columns of the framework, and have given us some food for thought concerning how best to close the "innovation gap" to ensure that the digital divide does not exacerbate the sharp growth in income inequality that has already occurred over the past two decades.

As an overarching comment, we urge Vice-President Gore--and all of the presidential candidates for that matter--to do more to highlight the issue of child poverty and what they would do about if elected President. It is true that real progress has been made in reducing child poverty since 1993 but we are sure you will agree that no one should be satisfied when nearly one in five children continue to live in poverty amidst such burgeoning national prosperity. We firmly believe that it could be a watershed moment in U.S. history if the major presidential candidates each agreed on the goal of reducing child poverty by at least fifty percent within a decade and then engaged in a vigorous national debate about who has the best plan and experience to help America achieve that goal. We are eager to hear back from you about whether the Vice-President would publicly endorse this goal.

As NCCP continues to expand its efforts to identify and promote strategies to reduce child poverty and as we develop our LIFT (Let's Invest in Families Today) initiative, we will pay close attention to the views of national leaders such as Vice-President Gore and the other major presidential candidates. We are committed to working with a broad array of key stakeholders to develop strategies and promote solutions to the problem of child poverty that will create a better future for the United States by improving the prospects of its most vulnerable citizens. Please do

not hesitate to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or ideas you may have that you think could be helpful to you or your colleagues in developing policies or to us as we pursue this issue. We look forward to further dialogue.