

**Testimony Submitted to
House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources**

**Regarding the October 27, 2011, Hearing:
Supplemental Security Income Benefits for Children
with Low-Income and Severe Mental and/or Physical Disabilities**

**By
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The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the October 27, 2011, Subcommittee on Human Resources hearing on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for low-income children with severe mental and/or physical disabilities. The National Alliance is a non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of adolescents, especially those from poor families, by focusing greater attention and resources on their health needs and on innovative ways to address them. Its aim is to increase adolescents' access to integrated physical, behavioral, and sexual health care that can help them reduce health risk behaviors, identify their health problems earlier, and take on responsibility for managing their health conditions.

As many written testimonies have shown, cuts to SSI benefits for low-income children with disabilities would be nothing short of catastrophic.¹ Studies have consistently revealed that families raising children with disabilities face economic and material hardship at significantly greater rates than families without a child with disabilities. Over 70% of families of SSI children report having been unable to cover rent, food, utilities, transportation, and out-of-pocket medical costs. The SSI cash benefit enables families to access the services necessary for children to remain with their families in their community, rather than being sent to state facilities for institution-based care. Furthermore, these benefits are essential to preventing already hard-hit families from falling deeper into poverty. In short, the SSI benefit is critical in assisting families that struggle financially.

To reiterate statistics from other testimonies, of all children in America, only 1.6% receives SSI disability support. Children's SSI has experienced only modest growth since 2000, and there has

¹ The SSI Coalition for Children and Families, Advocacy Memo, 10/20/2011.

been little change in the percentage of impoverished children receiving SSI in the last decade.² Those children utilizing the SSI benefit are typically from broken or nontraditional homes, with almost 80% of the recipients living in households with one parent or no parent. The more than 150,000 children receiving SSI benefits and residing in households with no parents lived independently, with other relatives or nonrelatives, or in institutions or foster care.³

As the policy statement on SSI by the *American Academy of Pediatrics* makes clear, the SSI program “remains an important source of financial support for low-income families of children with special health care needs and disabling conditions.”⁴ It serves as a critical lifeline for our nation’s most vulnerable children and youth, making it possible for families to stay together rather than needing to send children with disabilities into institution-based care. Without it, more than 1.2 million children with severe disabilities and their families would suffer.

On the behalf of the National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health and the sixty-eight other national organizations that defend preserving SSI for low-income children with disabilities⁵, we proudly support those low-income children with severe physical and/or mental disorders who receive SSI and their families who continually struggle to care for them.

Respectfully,

Harriette Fox, CEO

² Social Security Administration. “SSI Statistical Report, 2010: Children Under Age 18.” Last accessed October 21, 2011.
http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_ast/2009/sect04.html#table20

³ “Recipients, by number of parents in the household, December 2010,” SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2010.
http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_ast/2010/sect04.pdf

⁴ Policy Statement—Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children and Youth With Disabilities. *American Academy of Pediatrics* 2009 Dec; 124(6).

⁵ “National Organizations that Support Preserving SSI for Low-Income Children with Disabilities.”
<http://www.bazelon.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ggGdM6QZBTs%3D&tabid=498>