

Christchurch Youth Council

Child Poverty Reduction Bill Submission



Introduction

The Christchurch Youth Council (Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi) is dedicated to advocating for a strong youth voice in Christchurch. We aim to provide young people with the avenue to have their say. We aim to create a community where the youth voice is as valued as all others in the community. Imagine every big conversation about Christchurch's future having a young person around the table: that's our dream!

Our kaupapa is to:

- 1) Advocate, support and strive for a stronger voice for young people.
- 2) Engage and promote the ideas of active citizenship and participation in order to encourage young people to contribute to their communities.
- 3) Create space and a positive environment to allow young people to speak about, and be involved with issues affecting them.
- 4) Foster networks and build relationships with decision makers in order to influence change for young people.

Consultation Method

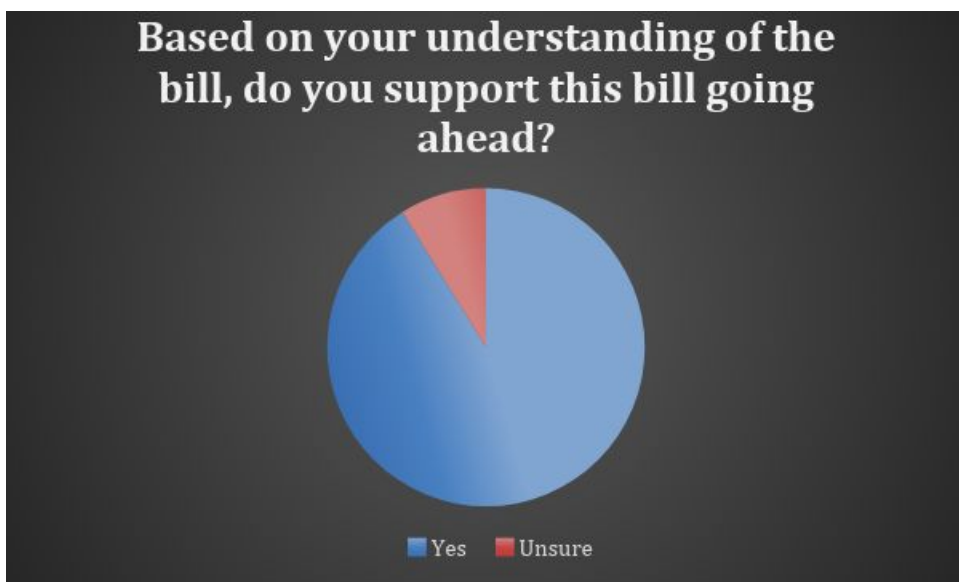
A subcommittee of Christchurch Youth Council members outlined an online consultation plan targeted at young people. We provided an simple and accessible outline of the proposed bill, and the Unicef description of child poverty. We then asked individuals to anonymously answer a range of questions which we thought were appropriate to create an informed submission on the bill.

The Christchurch Youth Council received 34 responses from the online survey. In previous consultation with young people, we have found that they prefer demographics to be optional, and therefore each of these questions was optional to respond to. We have also been told by many young people that narrow option fields for demographics like ethnicity and gender has dissuaded them from engaging and participating, therefore we ensure that we allow young people to write their own ethnicity/ies and gender.

We feel that we have got a fairly varied young people throughout Christchurch, with varying demographics, you will often bring varied points of view. We of course identify that we quite a small pool of respondents and therefore will have limited representation of young people in Christchurch.

In this survey, we aimed to target 12 – 24 year olds living or with close ties to Christchurch, however as we aim to be as inclusive as possible, we have not excluded the voices of those who fall outside of these demographics.

Support for the Bill



One of the most important things for young people being able to provide feedback on this Bill is that they feel they understand the bill adequately. One of the young people in the subcommittee worked to create a brief summary of the information in a way that was more accessible for young people.

Of the young people who responded 91% of them felt that they supported the draft bill going ahead, 9% of the respondents were unsure whether they supported the bill going ahead. We would like to note that many parts of the bill do not outline specifics for example what the targets will be in which the government will be required to achieve. This detail will have significant effects on whether the bill is supported or not. We are keen to hear what these targets will be and have opportunity to feedback on these.

Wellbeing Indicators

As part of the Child Poverty Reduction Bill talks about wellbeing factors, we thought it would be relevant to see what wellbeing factors were very important to young people, the Christchurch Youth Council developed a range of questions based on their understanding of wellbeing and allowed young people to suggest other factors which contributed to improving ones wellbeing.

We felt that coming up with the average for this data would not appropriately show the young peoples point of view, we have therefore left this information raw so that we can see how many young people felt each way. Please note we have excluded 2-5 in this table as no individual selected these.

Wellbeing Factor: How important is it to the respondent -	1 - Not Important	6	7	8	9	10 - Very Important
To continue to learn and develop?				4	6	24
To have trusted relationships with family?			2	3	6	23
To have trusted relationships with friends?			1	4	7	22
To have a safe and suitable home environment?				2	5	27
To have access to mental health services which are affordable and suitable?		1	1	3	7	22
To have access to other health services which are affordable and suitable?				4	2	28
To have a positive view of yourself and an identity that is respected?			1	2	4	27
To have access to basic material need?				1	2	31
To have your voice heard and a choice in decisions that affect your future?				3	3	28
To you to have financial stability in your household?				3	6	25

As mentioned we allowed young people to outline other important factors which improve their well-being, we have provided them below:

- Being able to play sport
- Good weather
- Being able to afford to do the same stuff as my friend for example getting a good phone like everyone else in my year
- Being able to access educational support eg study link easily for my kids (we are having issues at the moment)
- Job stability
- Able to support other family members including those with disabilities
- Access to healthy food
- Access to clean air, water and environment
- Access to unbiased information and news
- Sense of community
- Ability to have fun

We felt it was good to see all of these wellbeing factors ranked so highly, it reiterates the importance of each of these factors. It was interesting to see the other factors that individuals felt made up their wellbeing as each of the points that was provided was really relevant and we can see how they affect ones wellbeing. It is good for the Christchurch Youth Council and the central government to note that individuals have different perceptions of what wellbeing is and consider this when creating wellbeing markers.

Actions the government could take to improve wellbeing

As stated in the purpose, the Child Poverty Reduction Bill intends to create a greater commitment to action on the part of the Government to address the well-being of all children, and the particular needs of children in poverty and those at greater risk. We asked the respondents to think about what actions the government could do to improve their individual wellbeing and the wellbeing of children in poverty. Throughout these questions we have seen three main themes. We will provide a summary of each of these themes and then list the recommendations from the respondents which sit outside of these themes.

Mental and General Health Access / Funding

Christchurch and Aotearoa as a whole has been facing particularly high rates of mental health issues in young people, we are therefore not surprised at the frequency of this topic in the feedback from our survey. Many of the respondents felt that one should be able to access mental health facilities more easily, suggestions for how to improve access included increase to funding, more preventative support instead of only those who are very unwell having access, and more variety in access for example family support and better school counselling.

Food Accessibility and Quality

Many of the respondents highlighted the need for sufficient nutrition for all children. The recommendation of school based food programmes may be a good way to ensure that children have access to healthy food. This would require support for the schools from the government and potentially local communities.

Respondents also suggested that the government should implement a sugar or fatty food tax, and reduce taxes on things like fresh vegetables. This would be a positive step for families to be able to manage obesity and allow the cheapest choice to be the healthiest choice.

Education and Support at School

Many of the respondents highlighted the need for education and support for parents and families about healthy eating, positive relationships, family violence etc. Many suggestions also included working with schools and communities to better understand poverty and what actions the community thinks should be taken. Numerous other suggestions for alternative education from how to manage money, other practical stuff like budgeting, looking after yourself both physically and emotionally, lessons for driving and swimming.

Housing

More funding to ensure that houses are warm and not damp, maybe a house WOF for people renting.

Government Assistance

The respondents suggested numerous ways setting up living wages in NZ and offering better maternity and paternity leave, to creating effective programmes to help children and families rise out of material and/or financial poverty.

Government Accountability

If this bill does go ahead, there are certain targets which the government has to deliver on, which are said to be published every three years. We asked the respondents if they thought that accountability was important to them. Almost every respondent felt that it was important to hold the government accountable to their targets.

It is not just important to hit these targets, but it is also important to for the government to publish the information youth-friendly and accessible way. We asked the respondents for suggestions for this some of which are include the method of delivering - like tv ads and utilising social media. Respondents also suggested that young people contribute to

Name Change

One of the parts of the act states that the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 is to be renamed the Children's Act 2014. 71% of the respondents felt agreed with the proposed name change, and only one respondent did not agree with the name change. From this we have drawn the conclusion that this is a suitable change.

Do you agree with the proposed name change?



Doesn't matter to me Not sure Yes No

Conclusion

We hope the New Zealand Government finds our submission of value and we appreciate the opportunity to submit on this issue.. We would also like to recognise our own efforts in this process, we are an organisation made up of hard working volunteers and feel that we are an asset for the Christchurch City Council and New Zealand Government, and hope to further strengthen our relationship and continue to support your mahi in the future.