

December XX, 2013

600 MARYLAND AVE SW
SUITE 835W
WASHINGTON, DC 20024

Dear Member of Congress:

With the recent fiscal crisis temporarily resolved, the following [XXXX] national organizations urge you to turn your attention toward **replacing sequestration with a bipartisan, balanced approach to deficit reduction**. The budget conference opens a critical window to finally enact a responsible fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget that replaces sequestration and reinvests in our eroding national investments.

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Nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs play a vital role in the health and well-being of our communities and neighbors. Despite the vast array of important services provided through NDD programs—from education and job training, to housing and science, to National Parks and veterans services, to public health, safety and security—these programs have been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years as lawmakers work to reduce the deficit, even though experts agree these programs don't contribute to our nation's mid- and longer-term debt problem. In 2014, **NDD funding will be nearly 18 percent below 2010 levels** adjusted only for inflation as a result of cuts made in the 2011 appropriations process and the Budget Control Act, including sequestration.

- Between FY 2010 and 2011, NDD programs were cut by 7 percent on average, with cuts to some programs as deep as 50 percent and many eliminated entirely.
- Under the Budget Control Act's spending caps, these programs have been cut an additional 5 percent between FY 2011 and FY 2014 before sequestration.
- With sequestration and the Budget Control Act spending caps, these programs have been cut an additional 11 percent during the same period.

These cuts bring funding for NDD programs as a share of our economy to the lowest level on record, with data going back to 1976.

As illustrated in the new impact report from NDD United, *Faces of Austerity*, real Americans are already feeling the negative effects of these cuts across the country and around the world. They are dragging down our economic recovery, denying children educational opportunities, leaving low-income seniors without food, hindering scientific discovery, eroding our infrastructure, threatening our ability to address emergencies around the world, and compromising public health.

Sequestration locks in these devastating cuts for the next eight years. The 57,000 low-income children who have been denied Head Start won't be returning. The four million fewer meals delivered to low-income seniors will be absent again in coming years. The 2,000 grants that could have discovered the next medical breakthrough will go unfunded. The same goes for all the other Americans who have lost opportunities and benefits, been denied services, or faced furloughs. Future years will be worse. In FY 2013, federal agencies searched for ways to minimize the impact of sequestration—using one-time savings or carry over funding to mitigate harm—but many of those options won't be available in FY 2014 and so it will be harder and harder to avoid real harm.

Simply put, sequestration is unworkable. No amount of flexibility, carve outs, or piecemeal fixes will make it so.

We cannot allow sequestration to continue. Congress has cut more than \$1.6 trillion from discretionary spending and raised approximately \$700 billion in revenues, even before accounting for sequestration. The deficit reduction enacted over the past few years has come overwhelmingly from discretionary spending cuts at ratios far beyond those recommended by bipartisan, deficit reduction groups of experts. **Congress must now enact a responsible FY 2014 budget that replaces sequestration with a balanced plan that recognizes the significant cuts already made to discretionary programs.** In so doing, relief from sequestration must be equally balanced between NDD and defense programs, as strong investments in both NDD and defense programs are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact Emily Holubowich, Executive Director of the Coalition for Health Funding (202-484-1100 or eholubowich@dc-crd.com). An electronic copy of this letter, as well as *Faces of Austerity*, is available at www.nddunited.org.

Sincerely,