

February 18, 2015

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Dear Representative/Senator:

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 negotiated by Representative Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray provided partial, temporary relief from sequestration. With the expiration of this relief in fiscal year (FY) 2016, lawmakers should act quickly to stop sequestration from taking effect in the upcoming fiscal year. The undersigned 2,100 national, state, and local organizations—representing the hundreds of millions of Americans who support and benefit from nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs—strongly urge lawmakers to **replace sequestration with a balanced approach to deficit reduction**. In so doing, we ask that you consider the following:

- 1. NDD programs have already been cut too much.** NDD programs play a vital role in the health and well-being of our lives and communities. 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 across the political spectrum agree these programs aren't a driving factor behind our nation's mid- and long-term fiscal challenges. As a result of sequestration and other austerity measures enacted since 2011, NDD funding in FY 2014 was about 15 percent below 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation. Without action to stop sequestration, in FY 2016 NDD programs will decline to 3.1 percent of GDP — equal to the lowest level in at least 50 years.
- 2. NDD cuts have consequences.** As illustrated in the NDD United impact report, [Faces of Austerity](#), and other accounts from across the NDD sectors, real Americans are feeling the negative effects of the Budget Control Act's austere spending caps and sequestration. These self-imposed cuts are dragging down our economic recovery, hampering business growth and development, weakening public health preparedness and response, reducing resources for our nation's schools and colleges, compromising federal oversight and fraud recovery, hindering scientific discovery, eroding our infrastructure, and threatening our ability to address emergencies around the world. Simply put, these cuts are bad for the country and are not sustainable.
- 3. NDD programs make America strong.** The fundamental job of the federal government is to secure the safety of its citizens at home and abroad. But America's day-to-day security requires more than military might. NDD programs support our economy, drive our global competitiveness, and help Americans lead healthy, productive lives. Both the Budget Control Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act recognized that defense and nondefense programs contribute equally to the American way of life and that each deserves equal relief from sequestration. In FY 2016, lawmakers should adhere to this "parity principle" in any sequestration relief package.

Deficit reduction measures enacted since 2010 have come overwhelmingly from spending cuts, with the ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases far beyond those recommended by bipartisan groups of experts. And there is bipartisan agreement that sequestration is bad policy and ultimately hurts our nation. **Congress and the President must work together to end sequestration. Such sequestration relief must be equally balanced between nondefense and defense programs**, as strong investments in both NDD and defense are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact the NDD United Co-Chairs, Emily Holubowich, Executive Director of the Coalition for Health Funding ([eholubowich@dc-crd.com](mailto:eholubowich@dc-crd.com)) or Joel Packer, Executive Director of the Committee for Education Funding ([jpacker@cef.org](mailto:jpacker@cef.org)) An electronic copy of this letter, as well as *Faces of Austerity*, is available at [www.nddunited.org](http://www.nddunited.org).

**For a complete listing of supporting national, state, and local organizations, please visit**  
**<http://tinyurl.com/ouub5lt>**