

April 11, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

The National Women's Law Center is strongly opposed to the Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Resolution recently approved by the House Budget Committee. The House Budget Committee plan is fiscally irresponsible and would have a devastating impact on millions of women and their families.

Instead of offering a budget that provides for needed investments and a balanced plan for deficit reduction that includes both increased revenues and cuts in spending across a range of programs, the House Budget Committee plan makes deep cuts in safety net and other critical programs on which so many women and their families depend. At least two-thirds of this budget's cuts come from programs vital to low- and moderate-income people. The House Budget Committee plan would result in a massive shift of national resources from programs that alleviate hardship and poverty to tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and corporations.

By repealing the Affordable Care Act, the House Budget Committee plan would permit insurance companies to return to the days of treating women like a pre-existing condition by allowing insurers to charge women higher premiums than men, deny coverage to women due to pre-existing conditions, and refuse to cover maternity care.

The plan decimates Medicaid with an arbitrary cut of more than 20 percent, changing the program into a capped block grant that would shift costs to states—and ultimately recipients—and give Governors more power to slash or eliminate services. Older women in home care and nursing homes, women with disabilities, parents and pregnant women would be at risk of losing their health care.

The plan ends the promise of Medicare as we know it for those currently aged 55 or younger by putting insurance companies in charge and forcing enrollees to pay higher costs for less coverage. This scheme puts vulnerable women at risk and does nothing to address rising health care costs.

The budget calls for putting cuts to Social Security benefits—which now average just \$12,000 per year for women 65 and older, yet provide most of their income—on a fast track through Congress by changing budget rules. Although the House Budget Committee plan does not identify specific benefit cuts, it approvingly cites deep cuts proposed by the Bowles-Simpson report while it rejects the idea of requiring high earners—whose earnings above \$106,800 are currently exempt from Social Security taxes—to pay one extra penny into Social Security.

The budget would slash funding for domestic discretionary programs—which include child care, Head Start, family planning, K-12 education, Pell grants, job training, housing and energy assistance, maternal and child health, and services for the elderly—even more deeply than the devastating cuts proposed in H.R. 1. It would dismantle the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps), which was, for many families, the only functioning part of the safety net during the recession.

In addition, the House Budget Committee plan calls for capping total federal spending at a fixed share of the Gross Domestic Product, which would severely hamper the government's ability to respond to economic downturns or new demands. At the same time, the budget would further enrich the wealthy and powerful corporations by renewing the Bush-era tax cuts, lowering the top personal income tax rate to 25 percent, extending the December 2010 reduction in the estate tax for multi-million dollar estates, and eliminating the modest tax on high earners and wealthy investors that helps finance the Affordable Care Act. Corporations would also see their tax rate drop from 35 percent to 25 percent.

This dangerous plan would slash vital services that affect women at every stage of their lives, while giving trillions in tax breaks to the rich. We urge you to reject the House Budget Committee plan and instead develop a budget for FY 2012 that provides the maximum help possible for vulnerable people, promotes tax fairness, and addresses the budget deficit in a responsible manner.

Sincerely,



Nancy Duff Campbell
Co-President



Marcia Greenberger
Co-President