

November 12, 2014

Dear (Senator/Representative):

We are writing to urge you to support a full-year omnibus appropriations bill for FY 2015 that responds to our nation's current urgent needs, to be enacted as soon as possible before the December 11 expiration of the current continuing resolution. The national organizations signing this letter represent human service providers, congregations, policy experts, labor, civil rights, and other community advocates and leaders. We know our nation depends on adequately funded and well-planned housing and home energy, public health, nutrition, education, child care, and many other community services. Agencies providing those services need to know how much they have to work with for the full year in order to operate the programs efficiently and effectively. They must be able to respond to emergency needs, such as combating the Ebola virus or protecting children fleeing from violence in Central America, that were not anticipated when FY 2014 funding was approved. Congress should shoulder its responsibility to make funding decisions based on today's realities, while avoiding cuts to vital services that help individuals and families rise out of poverty.

Full-Year Funding: It is especially important that Congress makes full-year funding decisions, as opposed to another short-term continuing resolution. Leaving agencies in a holding pattern for half the fiscal year will make it extremely difficult for them to address service needs. It will also make it more difficult for Congress to turn its attention to FY 2016 funding decisions in a timely way.

The bipartisan Ryan-Murray budget agreement over FYs 2014 and 2015 appropriations caps demonstrated that Congress can come to responsible agreement, and also narrowed the differences between the House and Senate so that a full-year appropriations bill responsive to individual program needs is not out of reach. Agreement could be blocked, however, if Congress allows itself to be distracted by fights over controversial policy riders. Please reject extraneous riders that will stand in the way of enacting a full-year spending bill.

Avoid Cuts to Vital Services: Funding for programs that help people get jobs, protect and care for children, secure housing, and prevent violence has been shrinking for years. In an analysis of over 100 programs of special importance to low-income people and communities, the Coalition on Human Needs found substantial cuts from FY 2010 through FY 2014. To mention just a few: rural health services have been cut 29 percent, adjusting for inflation. Low income home energy assistance (LIHEAP) has been slashed by 38 percent. Child welfare services have been cut by 12 percent or more. Juvenile justice programs have lost one-third or more of their funding. Many education programs have been cut by 8 percent or more, including grants to states to educate children with disabilities. Various job training programs have been cut 18 percent or more. The Public Housing Capital Fund was cut by almost one-third. These cuts illustrate why it is especially important to make program-by-program decisions about funding, making every effort to stop service losses that can deny people the opportunity to move forward.

Emergency Funding: When we are faced with emergencies such as the need to protect against the Ebola virus, there is a history of bipartisan support for designating the resources needed as emergency funding, so that other services do not have to be sacrificed to meet these new needs. In 2006, President Bush signed an emergency funding measure to prepare for a possible pandemic. In 2009, President Obama signed emergency appropriations legislation to address the H1N1 influenza virus. We urge you to take similar action to respond to Ebola and other urgent needs, such as protecting children who have fled violence in Central America.

Please finish work on full-year FY 2015 appropriations before the expiration date of the current temporary measure. Congress should focus in the new year on preventing the recurrence of sequestration in FY 2016, which, if left unchecked, will result in still deeper cuts harmful to the most vulnerable among us and to economic progress for all.

Sincerely,

9to5, National Association of Working Women
AFL-CIO
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
AIDS United
Alliance for a Just Society
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of Government Employees
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Friends Service Committee
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Psychological Association
American Student Association of Community Colleges
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Association of School Business Officials International
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bread for the World
Campaign for America's Future
Campaign for Youth Justice
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Community Change Action
Center for Effective Government
Child Care Aware of America
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Leadership Council
Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
CLASP
Coalition on Human Needs
Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE)
Committee for Education Funding

Community Action Partnership
Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA)
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Opportunity in Education
Daughters of Wisdom US Province
Early Care and Education Consortium
Easter Seals
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Evangelicals for Social Action
Every Child Matters Education Fund
Fair Share
Faith in Public Life
Families USA
Feeding America
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research and Action Center
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Peace Center
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Gamaliel
Generations United
Global Justice Institute
HIV Medicine Association
Human Rights Campaign
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO
International Union, United Auto Workers (UAW)
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Justice Team of the Congregation of St. Joseph
JWI (Jewish Women International)
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
LeadingAge
LEAnet, A National Coalition of Local Education Agencies
Legal Momentum
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Lutheran Services in America
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network
Magnet Schools of America
Mercy Housing, Inc.
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Metropolitan Community Churches
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National AIDS Housing Coalition
National Alliance of HUD Tenants
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs
National Association for Bilingual Education
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network, Inc.
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Child Support Enforcement Association
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Coalition for Literacy
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Disability Rights Network
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Energy Assistance Directors' Association
National Head Start Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Housing Conference
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Immigration Law Center
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National Jobs for All Coalition
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Priorities Project
National PTA
National Respite Coalition
National Skills Coalition
National Title I Association
National WIC Association
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Office of Social Justice of the Christian Reformed Church
Pentecostals & Charismatics for Peace & Justice
PHI - Quality Care through Quality Jobs

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
ProLiteracy
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
Rebuild America's Schools
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
RESULTS
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Leadership Team
Society for Humanistic Judaism
TESOL International Association
The AIDS Institute
The American Counseling Association
The Arc
The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
U.S. Jesuit Conference
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Sisters of the Presentation of the B.V.M. - US Province
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers, International
USAction
Voices for Progress
VOTE MOB
YMCA of the USA
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE