



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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MORE THAN 1,300 GROUPS TELL CONGRESS AND TRUMP: DON'T TAKE AMERICA BACKWARDS. REJECT EFFORTS TO CUT AND STRAIT-JACKET HUMAN NEEDS PROGRAMS

More than 1,300 groups, representing millions of people of faith, service providers, and human needs advocates nationwide, today delivered a warning to Congress and to President Trump: don't harm low-income and other vulnerable people and don't harm the economy by slashing basic safety-net programs such as Medicaid, SNAP (food stamps), Social Security, SSI and Medicare.

The 1,322 groups, whose numbers include anti-hunger groups, human service providers, local congregations, consumers, civil rights organizations, labor, small businesses, and other advocacy groups, all [signed a letter stating that "America's real greatness comes from its promise to extend opportunity and economic security to all."](#) They called upon the President and Congress to "make investments of proven effectiveness in order to fulfill this promise, and to reject policies and language that demean and discriminate against race, gender, immigrant status, disability or religion."

Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs, which circulated the letter, noted that it includes signers from all 50 states.

"Members of Congress should take heed that there are constituents throughout their district or state who are paying attention. The letter signers, just like the millions speaking out in recent days, will see through empty rhetoric and hold elected officials accountable for the actions they take," Weinstein said. "We have made considerable progress in fighting poverty in our country. But now, much of this progress is threatened. Loss of medical care and massive reductions to nutrition, education, housing, and legal assistance programs are just some of the cuts proposed and supported by Trump cabinet appointees and members of the congressional majority. These are all services that not only help lift or keep millions of Americans out of poverty – they also are engines of our economic growth."

[The letter outlined four principles](#) members of Congress and the new administration must adhere to in their new budget and policy actions:

- Protect and assist low-income and other vulnerable people.
- Invest in broadly shared economic growth and jobs.
- Increase revenues from fair sources.
- Seek savings from reducing waste in the Pentagon and elsewhere.

The letter was signed by 255 national groups and 1,067 local and state groups. Among the signers were over 130 anti-hunger groups, over 115 groups focused on housing and homelessness, and more than 80 faith-based organizations. Two of the state groups that signed are Every Child Matters in Maine and Creating a Hunger Free North Dakota Coalition.

MaryLou Beaver, Director of Every Child Matters in Maine, said it is particularly important that members of Congress do not repeal the Affordable Care Act without a replacement that adequately and effectively provides the same level of coverage.

“The uninsured rate in Maine has fallen by 17 percent since the ACA was enacted in 2010 and 22,000 Mainers have gained coverage,” Beaver said. “In addition, hundreds of thousands of Mainers with employer, Medicaid, individual market, or Medicare coverage also have benefited from new protections because of the ACA. We stand with groups in Maine and nationwide to fight to maintain a comprehensive, quality plan, and to prevent devastating harm both to those who have been able to obtain coverage for the very first time and the countless others who rely on protections that did not exist before the law was enacted.”

Karen Ehrens, Coordinator for the Creating a Hunger Free North Dakota Coalition, said North Dakota’s economy has experienced ups and downs since the 2008 financial crisis and downturn in mineral and commodity prices – and it is imperative that Congress preserve a safety net for the down times. “In fiscal year 2015, 53,000 North Dakota residents received SNAP benefits, or one in every 14 residents,” she said. “Currently, almost 90,000 people in North Dakota are covered by Medicaid or by the Children’s Health Insurance Program, including more than 41,000 children and more than 10,000 seniors and people with disabilities who are covered by both Medicaid and Medicare. We understand that people with low incomes, people with disabilities, senior citizens, Native Americans and other communities of color and other vulnerable populations can be pushed into economic distress and/or loss of health care services if these programs are cut or radically restructured, and join with advocates nationwide in the fight to protect them.”

The letter begins: “Millions of Americans are fearful for their future. Some are making ends meet but believe their economic prospects are uncertain; others struggle to lift their families

out of poverty. We join them in feeling the injustice of unshared prosperity, made worse by tax breaks favoring corporations and the wealthy and threats to key supports like health insurance that workers and families rely on.”

A copy of the letter and a list of signers are available [here](#).

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The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is an alliance of national organizations working together to promote public policies which address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable populations. The Coalition's members include service providers and faith groups, civil rights, religious, labor and professional organizations and those concerned with the well-being of children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities. For more information please visit www.chn.org.