



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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May 16, 2022

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of the Coalition on Human Needs, I am writing to urge you to support a robust increase in the non-defense discretionary appropriations category for FY 2023, no less than the 13 percent increase provided in President Biden's budget for these vital domestic and international programs.

The [Coalition on Human Needs](#) is an alliance of national organizations, including human service providers, faith groups, policy experts, labor, civil rights and other advocates concerned with meeting the needs of people with low incomes and other vulnerable people. We annually track appropriated programs covering many services of particular importance to poor and near-poor people, including health, education and job training, nutrition, home energy assistance, services for children, people with disabilities, and the aging, housing, and much more. In our most recent report, [The Urgent Need to Rebuild](#), including final FY 2022 figures, we find that nearly two-thirds of the programs tracked have still not overcome the losses they have sustained since FY 2010, the year before Congress imposed spending caps. Nearly one-third (58 programs) were cut 20 percent or more over the decade, adjusted for inflation. Programs with significant cuts include those especially needed now that rising prices have affected basic needs, such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which has been cut over 40 percent since FY 2010. The [National Energy Assistance Directors' Association](#) estimates that for the poorest 20 percent of households, utilities costs will rise from \$3,399 in 2021 to \$3,957 this year. Key job training programs have been cut about 20 percent or more, despite many unfilled job openings and the need for many workers to find better-paid employment. Community Service Employment for Older Americans has been cut more than 60 percent. Funding for children's mental health services dropped nearly 18 percent, while need has been rising. We badly need to increase our supply of affordable housing, but the Public Housing Operating Fund has declined by 15.5 percent. We need to reverse these losses.

In other areas, Congress has begun to rebuild, but the pandemic's toll on top of longstanding failures to invest makes further progress urgent. For child care and Head Start, the need to rebuild is especially urgent. Child care employment levels dropped from [494,360](#) to [438,520](#) from 2020 to 2021, a drop of more than 11 percent, in large part because pay is so inadequate, and that means parents cannot secure quality child care. Head Start programs are also unable to hire enough teachers. In Washington state, the [Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP](#) reports a 29 percent drop in enrollment between 2019 and 2021 because of inability to hire enough teachers. Rent is rising (over [11 percent](#) in the past year) as is the threat of

eviction; we need more rental vouchers and more affordable units. We must continue to expand prevention and treatment services for mental health and substance use disorders, their incidence accelerating at least in part due to the pandemic. Public health needs must be met.

We urge you to include separate broad appropriations categories for defense, veterans' medical care, and non-defense (domestic and international) programs. Veterans' medical care is projected by the Biden Administration to grow by 22 percent from FY 2022 to FY 2023. We understand that the medical needs of veterans must be met, and believe they will be met best by placing them in a separate category. Continuing to include veterans' medical care within NDD subjects it to competition with other vital NDD programs, while its higher rate of growth will swallow up a great proportion of Congress' agreed-upon funding level.

The rapid growth of veterans' medical care has masked the extent of funding losses that have occurred to the full range of NDD programs since FY 2010. Adjusted for inflation and population growth, FY 2022 funding levels for NDD declined by 3 percent since FY 2010. If V.A. Medical Care is taken out, the cuts in the rest of NDD are actually [9 percent](#).

Congress must reverse years of past cuts in annually appropriated domestic and international programs in order to respond to the many challenges facing us: the continued impact of COVID-19, inflation shocks, climate change, and longstanding income and opportunity gaps by race and ethnicity. We strongly urge you to work actively to support robust increases in these programs through every step in the FY 2023 appropriations process.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Weinstein", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Deborah Weinstein
Executive Director