

January XX, 2019

Dear Representative/Senator:

Without Congressional action, our nation faces deep cuts in the coming fiscal year in funding for critical non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs — affecting investments that touch every sector of our economy, from health care to infrastructure, scientific research, and education — as well as for defense. If Congress does not act, the misguided austerity policies of the 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA) will govern funding for 2020 and 2021.

We, the undersigned XXXX national, state, and local organizations, urge you to take immediate steps to negotiate a new budget agreement that averts these cuts and provides funding for new investments that our economy needs.

Over the last six years, Congress has routinely come together in a bipartisan fashion to reach budget agreements that reduce the BCA's harmful sequestration cuts. The budget agreement struck for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 took the important step of not only fully reversing the sequestration cuts, but also providing additional resources to address the country's significant investment needs. Even with that agreement, however, NDD funding in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 remains below 2010 levels (adjusted for inflation).

If Congress fails to reach a new budget agreement in the coming year, overall NDD funding would be cut by 12 percent (adjusting for inflation) compared to fiscal 2019 levels, with many areas sustaining far deeper cuts as Congress seeks to limit the damage in certain areas at the expense of other national priorities.

Congress and the White House must work together to avoid these cuts and provide new resources that will allow the country to address critical unmet funding needs and investment priorities in areas such as veterans' health care, job training, education, housing, children's services, the 2020 Census, national parks, scientific research, affordable housing and health and safety. In doing so, we ask that you consider the following:

1. **The most recent budget agreement provided important resources for some critical areas.** Previous bipartisan budget deals have provided spending cap relief that has allowed Congress to more adequately fund services essential to Americans nationwide. For example, funding for biomedical research has grown, allowing scientists to conduct research and discover life-saving treatments and cures. And the most recent agreement that went beyond just providing relief from sequestration resulted in critical new investments in child care, Head Start, and housing programs, but these funding increases have only started to chip away at the large unmet needs in these areas. Sustaining these investments and making further progress to address important needs will require a strong, bipartisan budget agreement for 2020 and 2021.

2. **Large investment needs exist — funding for many NDD programs remains inadequate to meet the needs of the American people.** Overall NDD appropriations remain below funding levels from a decade ago, despite a growing population and rising needs and costs in many areas. The BCA led to broad-scale disinvestment in a host of areas – funding over the 2011-2017 period was hundreds of billions *less* than what was needed just to maintain 2010 funding, adjusted for inflation. And, in the coming years, Congress must address new costs in certain areas, such as rising costs in housing program rents and veterans’ health care, and the cost of running a successful 2020 Census. A new budget deal must address the need both for broad-based investments and for funding specific areas with acute short-term needs.

3. **The BCA’s non-defense cuts had serious consequences, and reversing them requires additional resources.** The BCA’s austere spending caps and sequestration cuts hurt American families, communities and the economy, as illustrated in the NDD United impact report, *Faces of Austerity*. The cuts dragged down our economic recovery, hampered business growth and development, weakened public health preparedness and response, reduced resources for our nation’s schools and colleges, compromised federal oversight and fraud recovery, hindered scientific discovery, eroded our infrastructure, and threatened our ability to address emergencies around the world. Fully reversing these problems requires investment in a host of areas, and while the 2018 budget deal was a step in the right direction, it was not a cure-all for years of cuts and disinvestment.

4. **NDD programs are essential to national security.** A 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. They also protect health and safety directly, by training physicians, ensuring workplace safety, protecting our food and drug supply, and inspecting the nation’s mines. All of the previous bipartisan budget agreements reflected the contributions that both defense and nondefense programs provide to the American way of life and to our health, safety and security. In the next agreement, lawmakers should continue to adhere to this “parity principle” and provide equal investment across these parts of the budget when crafting reasonable discretionary budget levels for the future.

Congress and the President must work together to reach a new agreement that averts the cuts that would be required under the Budget Control Act and allows us to make smart investments in our nation’s future. In reaching an agreement, new investment **must be balanced between nondefense and defense programs, as strong investments in both NDD and defense are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure.**

We are eager to work with you to help produce another bipartisan budget agreement to protect critical discretionary-funded programs.

If you have questions about this letter, please contact the NDD United Co-Chairs, Emily Holubowich (eholubowich@dc-crd.com), Sheryl Cohen (cohen@acq-consultants.com), or Ben Corb (bcorb@asbmb.org). An electronic copy of this letter, as well as *Faces of Austerity*, is available at www.nddunited.org.