

May 17, 2017

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The Honorable Diane Black
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The Honorable John Yarmuth
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In February, more than 2,000 national, state, and local organizations joined together to call on Congress to end sequestration, raise the spending caps, and enact a budget that recognizes the critical role of nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs in improving individuals' lives and benefiting the nation. In so doing, we advocated for a budget that abides by the parity principle established in the Budget Control Act and both bipartisan budget deals—that defense and NDD programs are both important to our national and economic security and thus, NDD programs should receive no less relief from sequestration than defense programs. Today, we urge you to adhere to these principles as you prepare your budget resolution for fiscal year (FY) 2018 in recognition of the harm and lost opportunities posed by cuts that NDD programs have already sustained.

Despite the vast array of critical, effective services provided through NDD programs—infrastructure and housing, veterans services, education and job training, National Parks, medical and scientific research, and public health, safety and security, to name a few—overall NDD appropriations have been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years as lawmakers work to reduce the deficit, even though experts across the political spectrum agree these programs are not a driving factor behind our nation's mid- and long-term fiscal challenges. As a result of sequestration and other austerity measures enacted beginning in 2011, the cap on NDD funding in FY 2017 is 13.4 percent below 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation. Without action to stop sequestration, in FY 2018 NDD programs are projected to decline to 3.1 percent of GDP—equal to the lowest level in more than 50 years and a historic disinvestment in people and communities.

Policymakers often say that ensuring the safety and security of the American people is the primary responsibility of the federal government. NDD United couldn't agree more. But it takes more than just the Department of Defense to protect Americans. NDD programs play a critical role in national security by protecting us from threats such as disease, natural disasters, domestic terrorism, hunger and homelessness, and by strengthening our citizens through education, job training, infrastructure, and programs to meet basic needs. We know too well from experience that continued cuts to NDD programs do more harm than good:

- Education, housing, nutrition, public health, and workforce development programs are unable to meet the fundamental needs of our people.
- Scientific discovery has been hindered and public health preparedness and response have been weakened.
- Maintenance of air traffic control, weather systems, and National Parks has been deferred, undermining our nations' core infrastructure.
- Proven programs and new innovations to protect victims, prevent crime, and reduce recidivism have been curbed, eroding efforts to improve state and local justice systems and achieve an effective, balanced justice system overall.
- Programs designed to address hunger and poverty around the world have been impeded, compromising our ability to address emergencies around the world.

Deficit reduction measures enacted beginning in 2011 have overwhelmingly relied on spending cuts, with the ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases far exceeding those recommended by bipartisan groups of experts. And there is bipartisan agreement that sequestration is bad policy and ultimately hurts our nation. **Congress should use the budget resolution to protect NDD programs from further cuts and end sequestration. Such sequestration relief must be equally balanced between nondefense and defense programs**, as strong investments in both NDD and defense are necessary to keep our country competitive, safe, and secure.

Sincerely,



Emily J. Holubowich
 Founding Co-Chair, NDD United
 Executive Director, Coalition for Health Funding



Joel Packer
 Founding Co-Chair, NDD United



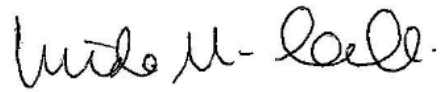
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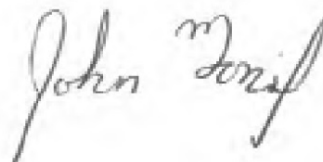
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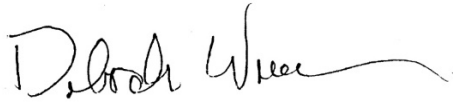
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Cc: Members, House and Senate Committees on Budget