

December 12, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer,

We, the undersigned organizations, represent constituencies from across the health care space and are writing to express our concern about S.2765, the Bipartisan Congressional Budget Reform Act, sponsored by Senators Enzi and Whitehouse. While the bill contains helpful improvements to the current federal budget process, the legislation also contains language that could force Congress to enact deep cuts to health care programs that are vital to the health and wellbeing of hundreds of millions of people in our country. In particular, we are concerned about the provisions in the bill that would create a new budget reconciliation process that, when triggered, would result in spending cuts far greater than the deficit reductions required by the Budget Control Act of 2011's failed "super committee". We ask you to oppose this legislation and ensure that it does not come to a vote.

Most notably, S.2765 restructures the budget process by requiring a budget resolution at the beginning of each Congress, and states that if the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) finds after the first year of the resolution the projected debt-to-GDP is higher than was originally included in the budget, Congress could pass immediate austerity measures under a budget reconciliation bill. If this provision had been in effect, every budget resolution since 2016 would have triggered the reconciliation process, allowing the senate to make several trillion dollars in spending cuts or tax increases in order to meet CBO's projection.

The bill uses reconciliation to ensure debt-reduction legislation passes quickly, all but guaranteeing that it will be a highly partisan process, and making draconian cuts in mandatory programs – such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicare, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), and Supplemental Security Income – highly likely. This would have a devastating impact on millions of families who rely on these programs each year. In 2018, for instance, over half of children in the United States received their health care coverage through Medicaid or CHIP.

Cuts triggered by S.2765 would not only have serious, adverse impacts on families, but they would also be likely to make recessions deeper and more frequent. Almost certainly, downturns in the economy would cause CBO's projected debt-to-GDP ratio to exceed the budget resolution figure, triggering deep cuts to critical health care programs.

In times of economic downturn, the government needs to be protecting and shoring up Medicaid and other safety net programs, not imposing draconian cuts. This legislation would

require cuts to essential federal funding streams at the very time safety net programs are most needed by families.

Although Congress may wish to take steps to improve the federal government's long-run fiscal outlook, the Enzi-Whitehouse bill is the wrong approach. We urge you to oppose this bill and ensure it does not come up for a vote in the Senate.

Sincerely,

AFT-Washington
AIDS United
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Medical Student Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Brain Injury Association of America
Center for American Progress
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Children's Defense Fund - New York
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Families USA
Family Based Services Association of NJ
Family Voices NJ
Hawai'i Families As Allies
Health Care is a Human Right
Heartland Alliance
HIV Medicine Association
Justice in Aging
League of Women Voters of the United States
Lutheran Services in America
Meals on Wheels America

Medicare Rights Center
MomsRising
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Social Workers
National Council on Aging
National Disability Rights Network
National Partnership for Women & Families
National WIC Association
National Women's Health Network
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
PSARA (Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action)
RESULTS
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition
Service Employees International Union
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
Starbridge
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
Universal Health Care Action Network
UPLIFT
Washington Community Action Network

Cc: Senators Enzi and Whitehouse