

February XX, 2017

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Dear Representative/Senator:

The undersigned XXXX national, state, and local organizations urge you to help ensure adequate funding for programs funded through annual appropriations, by continuing the bipartisan practice of providing relief from sequestration budget cuts and opposing any new efforts to cut these programs more deeply. These "nondefense discretionary" (NDD) programs serve many vital national needs but have been subject to repeated cuts over the past six years, including through the appropriations caps and sequestration process established by the 2011 Budget Control Act. Full sequestration returns in fiscal year (FY) 2018, when the two-year relief provided by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 expires. Congress should avoid making further reductions in these programs and work to replace the scheduled sequestration cuts through a package that is balanced—both in how such relief is paid for and how it is applied to defense and NDD programs. In doing so, we ask that you consider the following:

- 1. NDD programs are essential to national security.** The 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. Both the Budget Control Act and the Bipartisan Budget Acts of 2013 and 2015 recognized that defense and nondefense programs both contribute to the American way of life and to our security. In FY 2018, lawmakers should continue to adhere to this "parity principle" in fiscal policies, including a sequestration relief package.
- 2. NDD programs have already been cut too much.** Despite the vast array of important, effective services provided through these programs—infrastructure and housing, veterans services, education and job training, National Parks, medical and scientific research, and public health, safety and security, to give just some examples—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 aren't 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.
- 3. NDD cuts have consequences.** As illustrated in the NDD United impact report, *Faces of Austerity*, and other accounts from across the NDD sectors, Americans are feeling the negative effects of the Budget Control Act's austere spending caps and sequestration. These cuts are dragging down our economic recovery, hampering business growth and development, weakening public health preparedness and response, reducing resources for our nation's schools and colleges, compromising federal oversight and fraud recovery, hindering scientific discovery, eroding our infrastructure, and threatening our ability to address emergencies around the world. Simply put, these cuts are bad for the country and are not sustainable.

Deficit reduction measures enacted since 2010 have come overwhelmingly from spending cuts, with the ratio of spending cuts to revenue increases far beyond those recommended by bipartisan groups of experts. And there is bipartisan agreement that sequestration is bad policy and ultimately hurts our nation. **Congress and the**

President must work together 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.

We appreciate your consideration of this recommendation, and 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), Joel Packer (packer418@gmail.com), Sheryl Cohen (cohen@cef.org), or Ben Corb (bcorb@asbmb.org). An electronic copy of this letter, as well as *Faces of Austerity*, is available at www.nddunited.org.

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