

September 5, 2012

Honorable Keith Ellison
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ellison:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to express our strong support for your resolution, H. Res. 733. We share your view that any deal to replace the Budget Control Act of 2011 should not cut Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits, but rather consider serious revenue increases and strong levels of job-creating federal investments.

Social Security is perhaps the most successful income security program in our nation's history. It is an important economic lifeline for millions of America's most vulnerable people, including aged individuals and persons with disabilities, as well as their spouses, dependents, and survivors. Throughout its 77 year history, Social Security has been funded almost exclusively by contributions from workers and their employers, not by general revenues. It can pay all promised benefits in full until 2033, and 75 percent of benefits thereafter. Social Security has never contributed a single dime to the deficits that are plaguing our country today, and therefore does not belong in a conversation about deficit reduction.

We are also concerned about harmful cuts to Medicare and Medicaid that would shift health and long-term care costs to beneficiaries. This would be devastating for Medicare beneficiaries, including those who also rely on Medicaid to pay for Medicare's cost-sharing and for long-term care services and supports.

Medicare's costs are driven by continuing increases in health care spending system-wide. The problem is with the overall cost of health care, not with Medicare itself. Even with Medicare, health care is very expensive for older Americans. With half of Medicare beneficiaries having incomes below \$22,000 per year, many cannot afford to pay more for health care. Cutting Medicare benefits will simply force many to put off needed care until their conditions deteriorate and become much more expensive to treat.

Likewise, reductions to Medicaid funding would negatively impact low-income seniors, many of whom have spent their life savings to pay for long-term care. Older adults and people with disabilities account for two-thirds of all Medicaid spending, and Medicaid pays for about 62 percent of all long-term services and supports. Cutting the federal contribution to Medicaid would jeopardize the availability and quality of long-term care both in nursing homes and in the community.

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are vital to the economic and health security of millions of senior Americans. Any changes in these programs should be made based on what is best for the programs and their beneficiaries, and not what is expedient for reducing America's deficit. Congress can cut the deficit without cuts to these cherished and successful programs if it focuses on improving the economy and asking those who have done extremely well in the last decade to finally pay their fair share.

Thank you for your leadership on efforts to protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid recipients from reductions in the benefits they rely on for a secure retirement. We look forward to working with you to secure support of your resolution, H. Res. 733, which urges Members of the House to increase revenues to address our nation's deficit rather than cut essential safety net programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Richtman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Max Richtman
President and CEO