



## **ACTION ALERT**

### **Your Help Needed to Prevent Massive Cuts to Disability Programs**

#### **SUMMARY:**

Our Federal government is grappling with how to reduce our nation's deficit; and there is much at stake in this debate for people with disabilities and their families. While the President and leaders of both parties (Republicans and Democrats) agree that we need to lower the debt and deficit, they do not agree on *how* to it. Many Members of Congress are reluctant to make any cuts to defense; nor are they willing to raise revenue through raising taxes or closing tax loopholes. For political reasons, Congress is also (currently) reluctant to cut Social Security or Medicare. That leaves only two areas that would have to be cut very deeply to achieve the kind of savings Congress is looking for: **1) Medicaid and other safety net programs and 2) non-defense discretionary programs**, including employment and training, education, research, infrastructure, and the environment.

Over the next three months, the Congress will be dealing with complicated budget decisions involving annual appropriations, sequestration, and tax reform. However, **the bottom line is:**

**If deficit reduction proposals are not fair and balanced (including revenues, not just spending cuts), programs that provide supports and services for people with disabilities will face massive cuts.**

Over the August recess, Members of Congress will be back in their home states and districts. We need your help educating them about the real impact cuts to disability programs would have on real people.

#### **TAKE ACTION:**

**Use the Talking Points and additional information below to do the following:**

- SPEAK UP! at town hall meetings and other gatherings
- Visit them in their state/district offices
- Call their Washington office using the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121
- Give them your message, then pass this alert along to others!

**Message:** “I am calling to ask Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_ to find a balanced approach to our fiscal challenges without abandoning safety net and other programs that help people with disabilities. “ If time and opportunity allows, **share a specific example like the ones below** that express your concern. (see more talking points below)

Expanded Message: “I am calling to ask Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_ to work to find a balanced approach to our fiscal challenges without abandoning safety net and other programs that help people with disabilities. As a person with a disability, I have depended on (name a government program that has helped you) to help me live/work/learn in my own community and I am proud that I have been able to use this resource to help me be independent and live where I want to live.

**Feel free to find and email your members of Congress directly using [AUCD’s Action Center](#). (All you need is your zip code to find out who your Members are!)**

### **TALKING POINTS**

- As a parent of a child with a disability who receives IDEA services at school, I am concerned that any additional cuts will result in fewer special education teachers available in my school or district which means that students will not get the care and education they deserve.
- My son/daughter depends on Medicaid to live and work in the community. If it were not for Medicaid home and community based services, he would still be in an institution and not working.
- As a pediatrician I want to provide the best care to my patients. However, my training does not give me a whole lot of background on disabilities or chronic health conditions so I rely on HRSA’s Maternal and Child Health block grant training programs to provide me with information on specialty care that helps me serve my patients and keep them healthy.
- My child has a disability that insurance companies refer to as a “pre-existing condition” to deny our family the care s/he needs. Please provide the funding necessary to fully implement the Affordable Care Act.
- When I acquired my disability I had to make a career change. The government’s employment programs for people with disabilities really helped me out.
- I am a low income person with a disability and I live in section 8 housing. I have no place else to go if I lose my voucher.
- Drastic cuts in funding to discretionary programs serving people with disabilities will result in more dependence and isolation.
- Many disability services programs have been grossly under-funded for years, with appropriations not coming close to addressing the current unmet needs.
- Every year, more than one million children under the age of 5 who have disabilities or developmental delays go undiagnosed and enter school without the skills to be successful. We know that children who get the supports they need at the start of their lives have greater opportunities for independence as adults. Now is not the time to make it harder for these children to get the help they need.

- The budget should be balanced without detriment to people with disabilities, for whom government services and supports are vital to their ability to remain healthy, employed, educated and independent in their communities.
- Any modifications to Medicaid and other safety net programs, must not result in reduced access to needed services either directly, through eligibility restrictions or benefit cuts, or indirectly, through inadequate provider reimbursement rates.
- Deficit reduction strategies must reflect a thoughtful, balanced approach and include all aspects of the federal budget in order to protect people with disabilities.
- Any plan should include an analysis of how it will impact people with disabilities of all ages and other vulnerable populations.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Read the following materials to learn more about the federal budget and appropriations proposals:**

1. Budget: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of [House Budget Chairman Ryan's plan](#).
2. Appropriations: [Democratic report](#) analyzing the House Republican L-HHS-ED funding bill for FY 13.
  - [Republican summary of House L-HHS-ED funding](#) bill for FY 13
  - [Senate Committee passed bill](#) for L-HHS-ED funding for FY 13.
3. Sequestration: [Under Threat: Sequestration's Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services](#): report developed Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) with state by state impact of sequestration on jobs, education, and services, etc.
4. [Presentation by Robert Greenstein](#), President/Founder, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (June 4, 2012) where he explains the impact of the sequestration and its impact on current and future appropriations.
5. [NDD toolkit](#): A new coalition defending nondefense discretionary programs from sequestration cuts has some great background materials as well as nice templates for tweets, press releases, and talking points
6. [VIDEO](#): What Is Sequester? Why Should You Care? (Washington Post, July 2012)