

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

January 7, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

As you prepare your fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget recommendations, we urge you to work to strengthen and improve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits. At a time when many American families and seniors are still struggling financially and when concerns about retirement security are growing, we should act to improve their economic security. To that end, as co-chairs of the Congressional Task Force on Seniors, we ask you to reject any proposals that would cut benefits or shift costs to those who use the programs.

This year, we will celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Social Security. One out of every six Americans receives Social Security benefits: retired workers, disabled workers, survivors and children. Social Security keeps more than 22 million Americans – including 9 million older women and 1 million children – out of poverty, and its earned benefits represent 90 percent or more of total income for one in three retirees. We support your decision not to include use of the chained Consumer Price Index (CPI) in your FY2015 budget, which would reduce already modest benefits for current and future retirees. We encourage you to once again reject that approach. We also hope that you will recommend improvements in Social Security benefits, such as the use of a new Social Security cost-of-living adjustment based on the CPI for elderly consumers, increases in benefits (especially for low-income retirees and the most elderly), a caregiver credit and extension of the student benefits.

This year is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medicare, which provides essential benefits to 54 million seniors and people with disabilities. Half of all Medicare beneficiaries have incomes below \$23,500 and many struggle today to afford out-of-pocket costs that average three times those of the non-elderly population. We believe it is important to build on Medicare's strong foundation by finding ways to reduce spending growth without shifting even higher financial burdens to lower-income and middle-class seniors and people with disabilities. That is why we so strongly support the Affordable Care Act's emphasis on improving efficiency and innovation, eliminating fraud and abuse, and lowering prescription drug costs. We strongly encourage you to look for even more savings in those areas and to reject proposals to increase cost-sharing for current or future beneficiaries through higher premiums, deductibles or copayments -- including any new home health copayments. We are also concerned about past proposals to expand Part B and Part D premium means-testing, which are already having negative impacts on middle-class individuals in our districts.

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We know your commitment to Medicaid, which is also celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. We strongly support the improvements included in the Affordable Care Act, including Medicaid expansion opportunities, steps to improve access to home- and community-based long-term care services and new provisions to improve nursing home quality. Those are important steps forward in expanding access to affordable health and long-term services and supports. We should continue those efforts and reject proposals to cap Medicaid spending that would move us in the opposite direction.

Under your Administration, we have been able to make concrete improvements in the lives of seniors, people with disabilities, children and families. We are grateful for your leadership and look forward to working with you to continue and expand those efforts.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress