

May 9, 2012

Re: **Vote No on the Reconciliation Bill, H.R. 4966**

Dear Representative:

The National Women's Law Center writes in strong opposition to H.R. 4966, the Sequester Replacement and Sequester Replacement Reconciliation Act of 2012. The bill proposes devastating cuts to programs vital to women and their families, including Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), the Social Services Block Grant and the refundable Child Tax Credit. It would put the burden of deficit reduction on the backs of women and their families, jeopardizing their health and economic security by:

- **Cutting investments in women's health by eliminating the Prevention and Public Health Fund.** The Fund supports community-level, evidence-based prevention initiatives that target the chronic illnesses that are the top causes of death among American women, including heart attacks, cancer and stroke. The Fund also supports efforts to improve nutrition and increase physical activity to reduce obesity-related conditions such as diabetes, expand immunization services, including immunization against influenza and pneumonia, and improve detection of and early intervention in Alzheimer's Disease – all major concerns in women's health. The bill would eliminate the Fund entirely.
- **Repealing Medicaid eligibility protections under the ACA.** The ACA requires States to maintain the Medicaid eligibility rules they had in effect at the time of passage until the Medicaid eligibility expansion under the new law takes effect in January, 2014. The bill would repeal this maintenance-of-effort requirement, thereby allowing states to lower their eligibility standards for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. More than two-thirds of today's adult Medicaid enrollees are women.
- **Reducing access to affordable health insurance coverage by discouraging the use of premium tax credits.** The ACA will enable Americans without access to affordable health insurance to receive tax credits to help pay their insurance premiums based on their prior year's income. It also protects individuals and families from having to repay an excessive amount if there is a mid-year change in income or family status, such as a new job, a promotion or marriage. The bill would entirely eliminate this protection, leaving individuals vulnerable to an unaffordable tax bill. Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to refuse coverage for fear of the repayment penalty; women will be particularly affected because they are more likely to be eligible for premium tax credits and more likely to experience large changes in earnings during the year.
- **Repealing the funding for State Health Insurance Exchanges.** Under the ACA, states may establish and operate health insurance exchanges, which will enable individuals and small businesses to purchase qualified health plans in a consumer-friendly, transparent marketplace. The bill would repeal HHS's authority to make grants to states to assist with

costs related to establishing exchanges, jeopardizing the establishment and functioning of exchanges which would otherwise help nearly 7 million currently uninsured women obtain health coverage.

- **Cutting nutrition assistance for low-income families.** The bill would reduce SNAP benefits almost immediately for 44 million low-income Americans and entirely eliminate SNAP benefits for about 2 million more people. Women are nearly two-thirds of adult SNAP recipients; about half of all SNAP recipients are children. In addition, 200,000 low-income children would lose access to free school meals.
- **Repealing the Social Services Block Grant.** SSBG funds services for over 22 million people, about half of whom are children. One of the largest service categories is child care—an essential service for low-income women to be able to enter and remain in the work force. Even with SSBG, only one in six children eligible for federal child care assistance receives help. SSBG also funds a wide range of services for low-income and vulnerable people, including abuse prevention services, Meals on Wheels, and transportation and housing assistance.
- **Limiting Eligibility for the Refundable Child Tax Credit.** The Child Tax Credit is designed to help families meet the costs of raising children; it is refundable for families with at least \$3,000 in earnings so that low-income families, disproportionately headed by women, can receive some benefit even though they have little or no federal income tax liability. The bill would eliminate eligibility for the refundable Child Tax Credit for individuals who file their taxes using an Individual Tax Identification Number, not a Social Security Number. This means that the brunt of the cuts to this important tax benefit would fall upon immigrant families, who already experience higher rates of poverty.

The Center recognizes that the across-the-board spending cuts scheduled under the sequester would make damaging cuts to many programs important to women and their families. But this bill would be far worse. It would cut non-defense discretionary programs in 2013 almost as deeply as the sequester and permanently reduce or eliminate critical programs for vulnerable people—mostly women and children. At the same time, it would not close a single tax loophole; indeed, the budget it implements would give trillions of dollars in additional tax breaks to the wealthiest households and corporations.

We urge you to vote no on H.R. 4966.

Very truly yours,



Judy Waxman  
Vice President,  
Health and Reproductive Rights



Joan Entmacher  
Vice President,  
Family Economic Security