

November 14, 2023

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Leader McConnell and Leader Jeffries,

On behalf of the 73 national and state organizations working to advance gender equity, we urge you to act before November 17th, when the current continuing resolution (CR) expires, and approve Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bills to avoid a government shutdown.

As organizations fighting for gender justice, we are very concerned with cuts to vital domestic programs that directly impact the health, safety, and well-being of women, children, people of color, LGBTQI+ people, and families. We urge you to honor the budget deal on annual defense and nondefense appropriations set in the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act and oppose the funding levels set by House appropriators, where budget caps are less than the appropriations bills marked up in the Senate. The House appropriations bills would drastically cut funding from programs such as Title X, rental assistance, education, and nutrition assistance.

We are especially concerned with the following cuts:

- Defunding Title X, the only federal program dedicated to providing family planning services including contraception.
- Reducing the funding for Housing Choice Voucher contract renewals, would result in 6,000 fewer families receiving assistance under the Senate T-HUD bill and 40,000 fewer families receiving assistance under the House T-HUD bill. The House T-HUD bill would also defund the critically important work of implementing the Fair Housing Act's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing mandate.
- Defunding the Federal Work Study Program would impact around 659,000 students.
- Defunding education programs that support magnet schools, teacher training, social/emotional learning, English language acquisition, and childcare for students in higher education.
- A significant reduction in funding for low-income school districts and for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
- Dramatically reducing funding for the Department of Labor (DOL), including elimination of DOL's Women's Bureau, which focuses on safeguarding the economic security of women and their families.

- Rescinding the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) funding would reduce IRS capacity to enforce tax laws and increases the deficit by making it harder to pursue wealthy tax cheats. According to a new estimate from the Congressional Budget Office, cutting \$14.3 billion dollars from the IRS would result in \$26.8 billion in lost federal revenue thanks to less enforcement, and the IRS itself estimates the losses could be \$90 billion.

Additionally, per the administration's domestic supplemental request, Congress must provide at least \$16 billion in emergency child care dollars to avert a devastating decrease in the supply of care that will disrupt both families and our economy. On September 30, the American Rescue Plan child care stabilization dollars expired, leaving the sector with impossible choices. In the coming months, child care programs will have to raise prices to compensate for the lost revenue or find themselves unable to pay sufficient wages to retain staff. Meanwhile, parents will have to pay more or remove their children from care, putting at risk their family economic security in the short and long term in the face of rising costs. Congress must act with urgency to avoid this cliff and stabilize the child care sector.

We also urge you to fully fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to prevent a funding shortfall for the rest of the year, as well as sufficient funding in full-year appropriations to serve every eligible person who seeks to participate in the program. Currently, neither the House agriculture spending bill or the Senate appropriations "minibus" provides funding levels sufficient to fully fund WIC for FY24 and meet the needs of all women and children who apply for the program. Historically, WIC has had bipartisan support for more than 25 years to adequately fund the program to ensure no eligible family is turned away. Unfortunately, WIC is experiencing a 18.3% increase in child participation since 2020 and the program is expected to serve as many as 7 million pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children in fiscal year 2024, with a disproportionate number of Black and Latino families. With rising food costs and increased program participation, it is more critical than ever that we strengthen WIC to provide pregnant people, new parents, and toddlers with the nutrition assistance, formula, and breastfeeding counseling they so desperately need.

Furthermore, Congress must work to complete the appropriations process free of harmful riders targeting LGBTQI+ people, racial equity, immigrants, and access to reproductive health care. At a time when our fundamental rights are under attack, Congress must reject harmful poison pill policy riders that would further cause harm – and reject attempts to expand existing riders - including the Hyde and Weldon Amendments, attempts to further restrict abortion access for military service members and veterans, bans on gender-affirming care, attempts to prohibit transgender and

intersex women and girls to play school sports with their peers, attempts to prohibit implementation of regulatory protections for students who are survivors, LGBTQI+, and pregnant and parenting, and efforts to undermine the U.S. asylum system that harm immigrant survivors of gender based violence.

If Congress cannot come to agreement on FY24 appropriations bills before the November 17th deadline, we urge you to pass another short-term CR to prevent a government shutdown. A shutdown will only further hurt women, children, LGBTQI+ people, and families because of delays or lapses in federal benefits and services, federal workers won't receive a timely paycheck, and some will be furloughed, which will result in severe financial hardships on families struggling with elevated prices due to inflation.

Again, we strongly urge you to act swiftly and enact spending bills that will ensure adequate funding for non-defense discretionary programs. We ask you to reject any cuts to essential programs that will disproportionately impact women, children, LGBTQI+ people, and families and harmful policy riders. We also request that you include emergency funding for child care and WIC.

Sincerely,

National Women's Law Center
A Better Balance
AIDS Alabama
AIDS United
Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence
American Association of University Women
American Medical Women's Association
Athlete Ally
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network
Caring Across Generations
Center for Law and Social Policy
CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Community Change Action
End Rape On Campus
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality Federation
ERA Coalition
Esperanza United

Family Equality
Family Values @ Work
Feminist Majority
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Guttmacher Institute
Jewish Women International
Justice and Joy National Collaborative (formerly National Crittenton)
Just Solutions
Justice for Migrant Women
Lambda Legal
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Main Street Alliance
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Minority Veterans of America
Modern Military Association of America
MomsRising
Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Diaper Bank Network
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Immigration Law Center
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Organization of API Ending Sexual Violence
National Publish the ERA Task Force
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Women's Political Caucus
Oasis Legal Services
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Poverty Project at Institute for Policy Studies
Power to Decide
Reproductive Freedom for All (formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America)

Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)
Shattering Glass
Supermajority
TAHIRIH Justice Center
The Forum for Youth Investment
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
Ujima Inc., The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
UltraViolet Action
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity
Utahns Against Hunger
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE

CC:

The Honorable, Patty Murray, Chairwoman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Susan Collins, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable, Kay Granger, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations