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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
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& LAND FORCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON COMPETITION BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND THE
CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

February 21, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson:

I write today on behalf of more than nine million New Jersey residents to express deep concern at attacks on longstanding federal programs and agencies that communities in my state rely on each and every day, from Social Security and Medicaid to Department of Education funding for our schools. As they do for so many across the country, these programs ensure that New Jersey families can stay healthy, put food on the table, and afford basic necessities after they retire. These federal programs, which have long enjoyed bipartisan support, have come under fire from both President Trump's administration and now Republicans in Congress through the upcoming budget reconciliation package. These unprecedented attacks threaten the physical and financial well-being of New Jerseyans and millions across the United States, including in your home state of Louisiana. I strongly urge you to work with Democrats in Congress to pass a budget that meets the needs of the American people and puts an end to the dangerous actions of this administration.

I have received thousands of calls in recent weeks from New Jerseyans expressing alarm and fear – spanning concerns from data privacy, healthcare access, their children's education, and so much more. The impacts of the proposed budget resolution will be devastating and immediate. In particular, some of the deepest and most far-reaching impacts will be to Medicaid, Social Security, nutrition assistance for low-income families, and our nation's public education system:

1. **Medicaid:** I am deeply troubled by the proposal to cut \$880 billion from Medicaid. Medicaid coverage ensures that the most vulnerable people in our communities have access to healthcare and is an affirmation of our values — that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare, regardless of their income level. In New Jersey, nearly one in five residents, or approximately 1.9 million people, are covered under Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). NJ Medicaid, also called NJ FamilyCare, provides coverage for one in seven adults above the age of 18, one in three children, four in seven nursing home residents, one in seven Medicare beneficiaries, and one in three people with disabilities. Thirty percent of births in New Jersey are covered by Medicaid. To strip away federal funding for Medicaid is to strip away healthcare for people in every community. It will also cause irreparable harm to our entire healthcare system. Our hospitals, community health centers, and healthcare providers rely on Medicaid funding to continue serving everyone in our community. Without it, many will have to close their doors to all patients. There is also substantial evidence that access to Medicaid saves thousands of lives every year and boosts the academic achievement and long-term outcomes of millions of children.
2. **Social Security:** Social Security is a vital program that provides millions of New Jersey retirees with the benefits that they have earned over long careers. These benefits allow families to maintain a good standard of living – especially in high-cost states like New Jersey – while keeping thousands of New Jersey seniors out of poverty. While Social Security’s direct spending for retirees is mandatory spending not impacted by annual Congressional appropriations, funding for the Social Security Administration’s operating expenses – necessary for sending out checks, resolving benefits issues, and responding to concerns – is discretionary and requires Congressional approval.

Unfortunately, Congressional Republicans have not met this urgent need over the past year. The Social Security Administration wasn’t appropriated the operations funding they needed in the September 2024 Continuing Resolution – even after former President Biden urged an additional \$1.2 billion in critical funds – which forced them to freeze hiring last November. After the Social Security Administration hit a 27-year low in its number of employees last year, President Trump’s federal hiring freeze now threatens to dramatically undermine their ability to process claims and send out checks. Already, the Social Security Administration has said that it may take a year to provide benefits to teachers, firefighters, and police officers under the bipartisan *Social Security Fairness Act* due to a lack of staffing. Delaying Social Security benefits due to funding and staffing shortfalls is unacceptable. It is critical that funding cuts and hiring freezes for the Social Security Administration be immediately ended and that new operations funding be

appropriated. Millions of Americans are relying upon these critical funds to have their benefits delivered on time.

- 3. Nutrition Assistance:** Food insecurity is a growing issue in every community across New Jersey. As one of the wealthiest nations in the world, it is unacceptable to have so many families unsure about how they are going to put their next meal on the table. That's why programs like SNAP and our school meal programs are so critical. In New Jersey, nearly one million people, including over 250,000 children, are considered food insecure. In FY24, more than 800,000 New Jerseyans, or approximately 9% of the state's population, relied on SNAP benefits. More than 64% of those participants are in families with children and more than 37% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled. During the 2022-2023 school year, more than 600,000 children in New Jersey received free or reduced-cost lunches through the National School Lunch Program. There is absolutely no place in budget discussions for taking away access to food for families and children, especially at a time when grocery prices are skyrocketing and the price of eggs has risen by 47% in just the past three months. It is a moral failing of a government to allow children to go hungry.
- 4. Education:** Every child, regardless of ZIP code, deserves to have a high-quality education. In too many parts of our country, including in the state of New Jersey, which is consistently ranked as having one of the best public education systems in the nation, we are not living up to that value. Simply put: the solution to this problem cannot be to defund the very programs that are meant to reach the students most in need of resources. Annually, New Jersey receives roughly \$1 billion in funding for our K-12 schools, which is targeted at supporting our most at-risk children. Title I and IDEA funding are meant to provide additional resources for low-income children and students with special needs, and without that funding, those students will not get the education they deserve. Our schools are not only educating our children — they are educating our future workforce. By giving up on our students, we are giving up on their futures and ours as a country.

I implore you to consider the real-world harm that your proposed budget cuts will have. Fiscal budget concerns cannot overshadow the devastation that New Jersey's communities — and every community in this country — will face as a result of these proposed cuts. Such proposals are drastic, draconian, and display a true indifference for the very people we are meant to serve, while prioritizing the wealthiest among us.

As you work with Congressional leadership to draft the final reconciliation package and as you move to draft the FY26 budget, now is the time to show the American people your true values — and I implore you to stand with working families across the nation and prevent these proposed budget cuts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mikie Sherrill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress