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May 7, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

I am writing to express my strong concerns with the House Republican budget reconciliation package. The proposed cuts contained in this legislation would put our economy at risk and negatively impact programs that help struggling families in Massachusetts and around the country. While it is important to strengthen our nation's fiscal position, we must do so in a balanced way that does not unfairly burden working families. During this economic recovery, it is vital to protect programs that have successfully helped individuals and their families regain their footing.

Specifically, the House Republican proposal would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by \$33 billion, which in conjunction with the \$133 billion cut proposed in the House budget, would reduce or eliminate benefits for all SNAP households. As Massachusetts continues to rebuild from the economic downturn, SNAP benefits are

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critical support for the approximately 873,000 Massachusetts' residents who receive this vital assistance.

The House Republican proposal would also eliminate states' ability to use Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) eligibility to determine whether our most vulnerable families are eligible for a higher SNAP benefit. This change would reduce more than 100,000 households' benefits by about \$70 per month. It would disproportionately impact elders and people with disabilities who struggle on fixed incomes to make the choice between "heating" and "eating".

I also strongly oppose the House Republican proposal to eliminate the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). The SSBG works in a variety of ways to assist our most vulnerable citizens. In Massachusetts, the almost \$36 million that we receive through this block grant is used primarily for programs that provide placement services for abused and neglected children, family support services, including child care, residential shelters for victims of domestic violence as well as respite care and transportation services for disabled individuals.

Additionally, the House Republican proposal once again targets the successful Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF). I strongly oppose the proposed elimination of PPHF, a program that has made the implementation of critical long term preventative health programs possible. These programs help keep our citizens healthier and reduce long-term health care costs for families and individuals in our state. Massachusetts has received nearly \$43 million through the PPHF for a variety of multi-year cooperative agreements addressing a range of public health issues. By eliminating this vital program, we risk losing the great strides we have made in a number of areas, such as mental health, smoking cessation, and childhood obesity.

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I am also very concerned about the House Republican proposal that would require taxpayers claiming the refundable portion of the Child Tax Credit to have a Social Security number, a discriminatory requirement that targets immigrant families and would deprive millions of children who are U.S. citizens of the benefits of the credit.

A budget is a reflection of our values and priorities. By asking the less fortunate to make all the sacrifices, the House Republican budget proposal is an example of misplaced priorities that do not represent the values of our nation. While we must strengthen our nation's fiscal condition, we must do so in a fair and balanced way.

Sincerely,



cc: Massachusetts Congressional Delegation