

September 12, 2005

Senator Gordon Smith
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Blanche Lincoln
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Olympia Snowe
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

cc: United States Senate

Dear Senators:

The undersigned organizations are writing to thank you for your leadership in sending a letter to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, advocating that the Committee postpone indefinitely consideration of those elements in budget reconciliation that pertain to cuts in entitlement programs.

We agree the attention of the Congress and federal government should be focused on efforts to provide relief to those impacted by Hurricane Katrina, and that we must ensure in the urgency to tackle this natural disaster we do not undermine—when we should be strengthening—the very programs, including Medicaid and other programs, helping the impacted overcome barriers to basic needs. The current reconciliation process indeed would ultimately constrict the capacity of these programs to respond effectively and swiftly in this hour of need, and, in due course, set back progress in the relief efforts. This is bad public policy and must not be our aim.

Our attention must now be to rebuild shattered communities and to give hope and a future to those who have been left destitute by Hurricane Katrina. Cutting Medicaid and other safety net programs at this time may very well leave these individuals without access to needed health and long term care supports and services, as well as other important social services. Therefore, we believe as you do that this is best accomplished by preserving and strengthening our nation's entitlement programs at this time.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association on Mental Retardation
American Congress of Community Supports and Employment Services
American Counseling Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Diabetes Association
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Geriatrics Society
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association
American Public Health Association
Americans for Democratic Action
Association for Community Affiliated Plans
Association for University Centers on Disability
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center for Adolescent Health & the Law
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Consumers Union
Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals
Disability Service Providers of America
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Families USA
Gay Men's Health Crisis
Generations United
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Reproductive Health Access
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Medicare Rights Center
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Counties
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council of La Raza
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Health Council
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Indian Health Board
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Parents' Action for Children
People For the American Way
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Project Inform
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition

RESULTS

Service Employees International Union

Society for Adolescent Medicine

The Arc of the United States

U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

United Cerebral Palsy

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

United Jewish Communities

USAction

Voices for America's Children

Welfare Law Center