Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kerry
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Clyburn
United States House of Representatives
2135 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
United States House of Representatives
1226 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
United States House of Representatives
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dave Camp
United States House of Representatives
341 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Fred Upton
United States House of Representatives
2183 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jon Kyle
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pat Toomey
United States Senate
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senate
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

We are writing to request that you protect vital programs that comprise our social safety net, including but not limited to Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security, as well as the programs that provide economic security and opportunity to millions of Americans.

Vital safety net services and programs support those people hit the hardest by the Great Recession. These services help people and families maintain housing or find

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shelter, keep food on the table, assist in access to health care, and support those looking for employment, including the long-term unemployed. Examples of federal programs that provide such services include programs which assist disabled veterans to find an accessible home, ensure seniors receive food to eat, help people access our health care system, connect people seeking jobs with employment, give shelter to homeless families, and ensure that children get meals in school.

It is imperative that we protect vital safety net programs and programs that provide economic security and opportunity to millions of Americans, including those facing or living in poverty. The Census Bureau released data on September 13, 2011, revealing that 15 percent of Americans – 46.2 million people across this country – lived in poverty in 2010. This is the largest number of Americans living in poverty since the Census started collecting this data 52 years ago. For our nation's children under 18, 22 percent lived in poverty in 2010. That is 16.4 million children who do not know where their next meal is coming from, where they might be sleeping that night, and who are anxious overall about their well being and that of their parents.

According to the recent Census data release on poverty, the poverty numbers would have been worse had it not been for key federal programs like unemployment insurance, food stamps, and Medicaid (Census Bureau slide 25 located at http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/pdf/2010_Report.pdf).

For the last 25 years when we have come to deficit reduction agreements, these agreements have protected low-income programs. Beyond that, we have a moral and an economic obligation to care for our nation's most vulnerable, those facing or living in poverty. We respectfully implore that as you work through ways that our nation can reduce the deficit that you sustain our nation's safety net programs that assist people in obtaining or maintaining their access to basic human needs including food, shelter, and health care, and that provide ladders to opportunity for struggling families. These programs both support and create consumers, which result in increased demand and job creation. In the end, this reduces our deficit by enabling people to participate in our economy.

Again, we respectfully implore that as you work through ways that our nation can reduce the deficit that you sustain the vital human needs programs found across the federal government and accomplish deficit-reduction in a way that does not exacerbate poverty or inequality.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Joe Baca
Member of Congress

G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Donna M. Christensen
Delegate

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

Yvette Clarke
Member of Congress

Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
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David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Janice Hahn
Member of Congress

Bob Filner
Member of Congress

Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Jesse L. Jackson Jr.
Member of Congress

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Brad Miller
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

John W. Olver
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Delegate

Silvestre Reyes
Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Laura Richardson
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress

Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress

John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns
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Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Lynn C. Woolsey
Member of Congress