

# Statement in Opposition to the Republican Sequester Replacement Act of 2012

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Congressman Danny K. Davis

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Mr.

Speaker, I resolutely oppose H.R. 5652, the Sequester Replacement Act of 2012. As our nation struggles to emerge from one of its worst economic crises, I am profoundly disappointed with the Republican Leadership for offering legislation that would harm tens of millions of Americans to deliver a windfall of additional wealth to already-privileged individuals and companies. Such overt protection for the wealthiest and most secure at the expense of the most vulnerable represents an affront to American values and blatant disregard of a policymaker's responsibility to protect our nation's citizens. Robbing the poor, children, elderly, and ill to further balloon the wealth of the most affluent in our country is deplorable.

## The Sequester

Replacement Act of 2012 clearly demonstrates the fundamental disagreement between parties at present. The Democratic lawmakers believe that the federal government has the responsibility to help its citizens during times of struggle and economic hardship. To achieve this support and revitalize our nation, the Democrats maintain that shared responsibility among the wealthy and the middle class, defense and non-defense initiatives, and spending cuts and revenues are necessary. Strengthening our national and individual economic well-being requires balance. In contrast, the Republican Leadership asserts that the responsibility for helping the poor or vulnerable falls to individual charity and the path to economic revitalization is to eviscerate federal services that support the poor, elderly, children, and ill to deliver billions of dollars in financial assistance to the wealthiest individuals, oil companies, and businesses that ship jobs overseas.

There are multiple provisions within the Republican Sequestration bill that exemplify the approach of giving massive tax breaks to the wealthiest while slashing vital services to the vulnerable.

- Take the elimination of the Social Services Block Grant, which provides critical support for child care, child welfare, and elderly services. Nearly all SSBG funds serve the needs of vulnerable adults, children and disabled. Terminating the program will affect approximately 23 million people, half of them children. Cutting SSBG means the 1.7 million seniors would lose "Meals on Wheels" and other home-based services. Eliminating SSBG means that 1.7 million children likely lose access to protective services, 451,000 children would be denied foster care, and 640,000 children likely lose child abuse prevention services. Stopping SSBG means that 4.4 million children would lose child care and related assistance — a loss that is especially egregious when 22 states reported considerable wait-lists for child care assistance in 2011.

- Slashing \$36 billion to the food assistance program for the poor would reduce aid to 47 million Americans, terminate benefits for approximately 2 million low-income individuals, and revoke the automatic eligibility for free school meals for nearly 300,000 low-income children. In my Congressional District alone, there are 40,784 households receiving benefits - with 49.2% of these families having children under 18 and 30.9% having one or more people over the age of 60. These families already are bearing the brunt of our economic hardship. They cannot sustain further cuts to their food aid.
  
- Repealing the Medicaid and CHIP maintenance-of-effort requirements directly threatens the health coverage of millions of pregnant women, infants and children. Medicaid finances about 41% of births each year, serving as THE source of health care for 1 out of 4 children in our country &ndash; especially children with special healthcare needs. Removing the maintenance-of-effort protections of coverage would increase the number of uninsured children by at least 300,000 in 2015, as estimated by the Congressional Budget Office.
  
- Eliminating the Prevention and Public Health Fund further jeopardizes the health and well-being of women and children. Specifically, loss of the Prevention Fund means about 2.2 million fewer childhood vaccinations to prevent childhood diseases, 326,000 fewer breast cancer screenings, and 284,000 fewer cervical cancer screenings. Cutting the Prevention Fund means stopping tobacco cessation and obesity prevention programs. I have been a strong proponent of prevention my entire adult life given its proven ability to improve the quality of life for citizens with minimal financial investment. Indeed, proven community-based prevention programs yield an estimated return of \$5.60 for every dollar invested. Since 2010, the state of Illinois has received \$31 million from the Prevention Fund. I cannot support the loss of these funds.
  
- Dramatically reducing the Child Tax Credit by \$7.6 billion means that more than 3 million children would lose the pro-family support that their low-income families need to put food on the tables and roofs over their heads.

The Republican reconciliation bill offers an unacceptable vision for our nation that calls on the most vulnerable of our citizens to support a privileged lifestyle for the most secure. At a time in our history where more than one in five children currently lives in poverty and tens of millions of citizens struggle with unemployment, underemployment, and foreclosure, I cannot support such a vision that would undermine the well-being of millions of Americans. We must pursue a balanced approach to strengthening our nation&rsquo;s and our citizens&rsquo; economic well-being, asking all to share in the sacrifice.