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Budget Cuts Make Us Sicker, Poorer, and Less Secure

Urge Congress to Fully Fund Human Services and Replace the Sequester!

The HCH Community knows what works: affordable housing, accessible health care, livable incomes, and a strong social safety net. Improving access to these basic human needs is how we can reduce the burdens and incidence of homelessness. Unfortunately, the national focus on program cuts, culminating in **the automatic budget cuts known as the sequester, have stopped our progress and will increase homelessness if nothing is done.**

Right now, a Budget Conference Committee is negotiating spending levels for low-income housing, community health centers, and all other critical, nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs. **This is our best chance to get the sequester cuts replaced with something less damaging.** We have worked with partners on a recent report called [Faces of Austerity](#). It outlines the impact of budget cuts on real people and will help the advocacy effort. We need *Mobilizer* readers' help as well. **Call on your members of Congress and urge them to replace the sequester cuts and protect low-income programs during the budget negotiations!**

TAKE ACTION

The Budget Conference Committee faces long odds in trying to replace the sequester as disagreements between the House and Senate over taxes and spending still prevail. The two weeks between now and Thanksgiving will be crucial. Now is the time to demand that the sequester budget cuts be reversed.

Call the Capitol Switchboard toll-free at 1(877) 210-5351 to be connected to your members of Congress. If your member(s) are on the Budget Conference Committee, that is helpful (see a list of conferees [here](#)). You can speak to them about the work of the committee directly. If they are not, call and ask them to speak to their leadership and colleagues who are conferees. Use these talking points and resources:

- **The sequester cuts must be reversed.**
- The program cuts are real.
 - **Real people are being harmed.** Talk about the impact of cuts in your community and highlight the [Faces of Austerity report](#).
 - **Health centers could lose \$270 million.** Housing programs could lose billions. Check out the Council's [budget chart](#) for more information.
 - **Homelessness will increase.** A Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [report](#) estimates 185,000 housing vouchers will be lost.
- When homelessness increases, **public costs will go up** because of increased hospital and criminal justice costs.
- **The cuts will be worse this year**, as one-time budget fixes like delaying maintenance and using reserves are not available for a second year of low funding.
- The sequester cuts must not be replaced with other cuts that harm low-income people. **Protect SNAP and Medicaid.**

In addition to calling your members of Congress, we also need your help in advertising the Faces of Austerity report.

- Tweet the report. Use these [example tweets](#). Try tweeting at your member of Congress! Here are lists of [House](#) and [Senate](#) member twitter handles. Tag the Council at @NatlHCHCouncil.
- Check out the Council's [press release](#) and consider drafting your own with examples from your community.

This coordinated effort across issue areas is our best chance to stop these cuts and get back to investing in what we need to end homelessness. **Call, tweet, or write - just get the word out that we demand no more cuts!**

Background

How we got here: Part of the deal to reopen the government after the shutdown in October was the establishment of a House and Senate Budget Conference Committee. The Committee is charged with resolving the immense differences between the House and Senate Budget Resolutions which were passed in the Spring. The Senate Budget Resolution repealed the sequester and replaced it with targeted cuts in other areas and increases in revenues. The House Budget Resolution maintained the sequester and cut NDD programs even deeper in order to provide more money for defense. Each Budget Resolution laid out many other budgetary goals, but the Budget Conference Committee is focusing almost entirely on whether and how to replace the sequester. The negotiations will continue to face the stark disagreements between the House and Senate over tax and fiscal policy.

What happens next: The Budget Committee is charged with reaching an agreement by December 13, but there are no penalties if they fail to reach this agreement. The government is currently funded until January 15, 2014, so some Congressional action will be needed by that time to avoid another shutdown. If no deal is reached, the funding reductions from the sequester are likely to remain in place for all of 2014 and possibly beyond.

More about the NDD Report: The report was developed by [NDD United](#), a coalition of 3,200 organizations from across government who have come together to form a united voice in protecting NDD programs. NDD programs have borne the brunt of deficit reduction efforts to date. Both the National HCH Council and the National Association of Community Health Centers are working with NDD United, as well as many other health and human service organizations.

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