

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2017

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Throughout the course of your presidential campaign, you repeatedly committed to protecting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Many of your recent Cabinet appointments, however, publicly support drastic and harmful changes to these essential programs. These appointments, and the recent actions of some members of Congress, raise serious concerns about your previously stated commitment. Accordingly, we write to urge you to make a strong, unequivocal public statement that you remain committed to not cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Your appointment for Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tom Price, has authored proposals that would undermine the hard-earned, guaranteed benefits of Medicare by privatizing the system and ending Medicare as we know it. Price has also supported plans to make significant cuts to Medicaid, which would weaken the vital support it provides. As the Washington Post reported after his confirmation hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, “Trump has pledged not to cut Medicaid or Medicare, but Price did not do the same.”

Your pick for Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, has a similarly alarming record. During his Senate confirmation hearing, Mulvaney indicated that he intended to directly contradict your position related to Social Security and Medicare by advocating for raising the retirement age to 70 and means-testing benefits. These are troubling positions for people confirmed to serve a President who does not support such dramatic changes to these important programs.

In addition, the Senate recently debated several amendments offered to the Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 3 that would have protected Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid from being changed under “fast-track” reconciliation procedures. We are disappointed that these amendments failed to pass and the Senate decided against making a strong, affirmative statement that it would not deprive the American people of meaningful, transparent debate when considering fundamental changes to these bedrock programs. We feel strongly that any changes that would affect the eligibility requirements, change the qualifying age, cut benefits, or privatize these programs must not be approved through a “fast-track” process that denies the American public a transparent debate about the full impact these changes will have on their economic security.

Americans work hard to earn Social Security and Medicare benefits with the understanding that the federal government will uphold its commitment to protecting and ensuring the long-term existence of these important programs. Medicaid is vital, not just for children and those of low-

income, but also for millions of seniors and their families, when those older Americans find themselves unable to manage without long-term nursing home care.

In 2016, over 60 million Americans relied on Social Security benefits, including nearly 9 out of 10 Americans over the age of 65. Among elderly beneficiaries, Social Security benefits represent 90 percent or more of the income on which 21 percent of married elderly beneficiaries rely upon, and 43 percent of the income for unmarried seniors.

Nearly 131 million Americans—or approximately 41 percent of the population—rely on Medicare or Medicaid for access to health insurance. This includes more than 57 million seniors and people with disabilities who rely on Medicare and nearly 74 million low-income seniors and families, children, and others in every state who rely on Medicaid.

Simply put, the stakes of rushed, ill-conceived, or ideologically-focused changes to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid on the lives and security of American families are too high to be left ambiguous, particularly as you and our Senate colleagues seek to pursue legislation related to health care.

Therefore, we write to you with two simple requests that will go a long way toward showing the American people that you stand with them and are truly willing to work with us. We ask you to:

- 1.) Issue an unequivocal public statement affirming that you will not sign legislation that makes major changes to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid passed under “fast-track” reconciliation procedures and that does not have significant bipartisan support in Congress.
- 2.) Issue an Executive Order, Presidential Memoranda, or other official guidance to your Cabinet members affirming your support of these programs and directing that they issue similar public statements.

We believe taking these two important actions early will send a clear signal to Congress and the American people that you will stand behind your promises. On behalf of the millions of Americans who rely on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid to make ends meet, keep them healthy, and ensure their dignity in retirement or when wages are lost as the result of disability or death, we thank you for your attention and look forward to your response to this letter.

Sincerely,

  
MAZIE K. HIRONO                      JOE DONNELLY                      ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.  
United States Senator                      United States Senator                      United States Senator



  
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United States Senator

  
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