United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 13, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We would like to thank you for all of the work you have done to improve the economy, create jobs, and reduce the deficit.

We have made significant progress since the Great Recession. Our economy has now created over 8 million jobs and had 47 consecutive months of job growth. Today, while the long-term unemployment rate remains stubbornly high, the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since October of 2008. The $1.4 trillion federal deficit that you inherited has been cut by more than half – the largest reduction in the deficit in more than 50 years.

As you have acknowledged, however, much more work needs to be done and we are committed to working with you to build on this progress. We need to get more Americans back to work, create the millions of jobs that the American people need, increase the wages of American workers, protect the retirement benefits that our constituents have earned, and reduce the deficit in a fair way. The severe level of income and wealth inequality in America that you have been focusing on is an issue that must be addressed effectively. While those on top have more than recovered from the worst recession since the Great Depression, tens of millions of Americans continue to lose ground economically.

Today, retirement insecurity is as high as it has ever been. Only one in five workers in the private sector has a defined benefit pension plan; half of Americans have less than $10,000 in savings; and two-thirds of seniors rely on Social Security for a majority of their income.

Given this reality, we respectfully urge you not to propose cutting Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid benefits in your Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

In good times and bad, Social Security has succeeded in keeping millions of senior citizens, widows, orphans, and persons with disabilities out of extreme

poverty. Before Social Security was developed, about half of our seniors lived in poverty; today senior poverty is down to 9.1 percent. Without Social Security, one-third of senior citizens would have virtually no earnings at all.

Social Security has not contributed one penny to the deficit. Social Security has a surplus of more than $2.7 trillion and can pay every single benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 19 years.

We are also opposed to shifting the cost of healthcare onto senior citizens, the poor, and the disabled by cutting Medicare and Medicaid benefits. As you know, half of all Medicare recipients make less than $22,000 per year, and typical senior citizens already pay more than 17 percent of their fixed incomes on healthcare.

Further, Medicaid is a vital lifeline for some 72 million Americans. Two-thirds of all Medicaid spending supports senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Cutting Medicaid would jeopardize the quality of health care, long-term services, and nursing home care for tens of millions of Americans. There are significant cost issues in America's health care system that must be effectively addressed, but these challenges will not be remedied by benefit cuts to vulnerable Americans.

Mr. President: These are tough times for our country. With the middle class struggling and more people living in poverty than ever before, we urge you not to propose cuts in your budget to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits – cuts which would make life even more difficult for some of the most vulnerable people in America.

We look forward to working with you in support of the needs of the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor – and all working Americans.

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Tom Harkin
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Mark Begich
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Edward Markey
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator