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CONTACT:
Greg Wright
202.336.8324
gwright@naswdc.org

President Trump's full budget would shred nation's social safety net
NASW calls on Congress to protect vulnerable citizens by rejecting budget request

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The full fiscal year 2018 budget request released by President Trump would shred this nation's social safety net and the National Association of Social Workers urges Congress stand up for our nation's most vulnerable citizens and reject it.

It has often been said that a presidential budget is a statement of values. If that is true, then the Trump administration submitted a budget on May 23 that effectively devalues the needs of many low- and moderate-income Americans.

In reviewing the president's spending proposals, what becomes immediately clear is that the budget would severely damage the nation's social safety net.

With its reduction of \$1.7 trillion in social services and health care programs, the president's budget will severely constrict or eliminate programs that are essential to the health and welfare of millions of America's families and individuals.

The following are some of the safety net programs, among many, that will experience the most far-reaching impact:

Medicaid and Other Health Care

Disappointingly, the administration's FY 2018 budget request includes major cuts to Medicaid. This critical health care program protects children, low-income single adults, older Americans, and Americans with disabilities. Medicaid covers nearly one in four Americans and, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, accounts for one dollar out of every six dollars spent on health care in the country.

The proposed funding levels for Medicaid translate to an additional \$610 billion in cuts over the next 10 years. This reduction would be in addition to any Medicaid cuts resulting from passing Obamacare "repeal and replace" legislation. The proposed Medicaid cuts are significant because congressional leadership and the Trump administration need close to a trillion dollars to offset reduced revenues from tax cuts—mostly benefiting the very wealthy.

These cuts to Medicaid, and changes in how funds are allocated, devalue the health needs of the most vulnerable Americans and will result in the following:



- Compromised care for the elderly and disabled, who account for around [60 percent of Medicaid's expenditures](#);
- Because Medicaid covers [40 percent of the costs](#) for long-term care, cuts in the program will reduce access to this essential health care service and support for millions of older Americans;
- A disproportionate burden on women and children (currently, one-half of births in the United States are covered by Medicaid [according to the Kaiser Family Foundation](#)).

Other Health-Related Cuts

The President's FY 2018 budget request reduces many other vital programs:

- The National Institutes of Health's budget would be reduced from \$31.8 billion to \$26 billion. This cut could potentially halt research that would prevent life-threatening and severely debilitating diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease.
- The president's FY 2018 budget extends Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for two more years, but additional policies outlined in the Budget will lead to a \$5.8 billion cut in overall CHIP funding. This will compromise the effectiveness of CHIP, which insures health coverage for more than [8.4 million children](#).
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would face cuts of more than \$1 billion, including a \$222 million decrease in funding to the chronic disease prevention programs, which help people with conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.
- The National Science Foundation would face an 11 percent cut, resulting in a decrease of \$776 million.

Mental Health

Funding for mental health services is essential for a broad spectrum of Americans. However, key mental health programs are being targeted for major cuts in the administration's FY 2018 budget.

For example, the National Institute on Mental Health, which conducts important research on brain disorders and mental illnesses, will have its budget reduced by \$301 million. The president's budget also eliminates almost \$400 million from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, including a massive \$116 million taken from the agency's community mental health services block grant alone.

The Behavioral Health Workforce Education & Training (BHWET) program is targeted to be eliminated, resulting in a loss of \$50 million in funding authorized in the FY 2017 Continuing Resolution.

BHWET is essential to our profession and clients as it prioritizes efforts to provide direct behavioral health care services by employing behavioral health professionals to serve in communities with shortages in behavioral health clinicians.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

President Trump's 2018 budget proposes to cut SNAP (formerly referred to as food stamps) by more than [\\$193 billion over the next 10 years](#). This represents a more than 25 percent cut in funding. SNAP has long been a lifeline for low-income working families, seniors, children, Americans with disabilities, and individuals struggling to make ends meet.

In fact, SNAP funding helped lift [lifted 4.6 million people out of poverty](#) in 2015. Most of the cuts will be accomplished by cost shift to states, making millions of household ineligible for the SNAP program and reducing the size of benefits and number of participants.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the unemployed, older adults, and low-income working families with children would bear the brunt of the cuts.

Child and Family Financial Assistance and Nutrition Support

The budget slashes or eliminates a wide range of other crucial programs that help stabilize low-income families. For example the president's FY 2018 budget:

- Eliminates assistance for low-income families and seniors to pay heating and cooling bills;
- Takes the Child Tax Credit away from children living with immigrants, tax-paying parents who file their taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number—a group of about 5 million children, the vast majority of whom are U.S. citizens;
- Reduces the Assistance for Needy Children block grant by 10 percent for all states- this level of reduction in the state block grant will mean lower cash assistance for TANF families;
- Eliminates the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, which monitors federal contractors to ensure they abide by antidiscrimination and pay equity laws and promotes equal employment opportunity.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The nation is experiencing a crisis in the availability of affordable housing for low-income people and resurgence in homelessness, especially among [families](#). However, in the midst of this difficulty the administration's budget calls for significant reductions in funding for some of HUD's most vital programs that target families and the disabled:

- The president's FY 2018 budget calls for eliminating the national Housing Trust Fund. This housing program is in place to create and maintain affordable housing for very-low-income individuals and families, including those living in or at imminent risk of homelessness.
- The proposed budget also seeks to cut funding for tenant-based rental assistance by close to 5%. A 5% reduction would mean that an estimated 250,000 households would lose their housing assistance, thereby leaving them at risk of being evicted or homeless.
- The administration would also cut, by \$13 million, funding for new Section 811 vouchers for people with disabilities.
- The Budget would eliminate funding for new Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing vouchers for homeless veterans.
- HUD's FY 2018 budget is slated for a decrease in its project-based rental assistance program by \$465 million. This program is an essential resource that helps families that are at imminent risk for homelessness to maintain a stable living situation during a period of temporary financial crisis.
- Public housing, which is subsidized housing managed by local housing authorities throughout the nation, would have its funds reduced from its current budget of \$1.942 billion to \$628 million in FY2018—an overwhelming cut of 68%.
- The administration is proposing to reduce funding for HUD's homeless assistance programs, from \$2.38 billion to \$2.25 billion.
- Significantly, the HUD's budget calls for the elimination of the Community Development Block Grant program, the HOME Investment Partnerships program, Choice Neighborhoods grants, the Section 4 Capacity Building program, and the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program. All of these have effectively helped low- and moderate-income American families to reach home ownership and to access safe, habitable, and affordable housing.

Education

The President's FY 2018 budget includes cuts to effective and time-honored education programs that have helped children and adults alike. The budget proposal would

- Cut funding for the Work-Study program by almost 50%, which would eliminate employment for more than 300,000 low-income college students, about 25% of whom have an income below \$12,000;
- Eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, a lifeline for many social workers who rely on loan forgiveness when they work in agencies where they meet critical needs, but often are not compensated in a way that allows them to pay back their student loans;
- Remove \$3.9 billion from the Pell Grant budget, threatening to destabilize the program, which already covers less than [30 percent](#) of the average cost of college attendance;
- Eliminate Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, which help cover college costs for more than 1.6 million needy students;
- Reduce the commitment to improving skills that workers need to advance at every point, from youth to adulthood; it proposes severe cuts to adult basic education and literacy programs, and workforce training for low-income youths and adults through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Eliminate the Senior Community Service Employment Program's valuable subsidized job opportunities that give low-income unemployed Americans who are just a few years from retirement age a chance to earn wages and serve in their communities.

The president's budget offers a blueprint of the administration's priorities, and does not have a chance of being fully adopted by Congress.

It is NASW's position that members of Congress should make it clear that a strong social safety net to protect the most vulnerable is what makes America great.

We will continue to fight to ensure that Congress restores funding to health and welfare programs to meet the fundamental needs of children, older Americans, those living with disabilities, and other marginalized Americans.

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The [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\)](#), in Washington, DC, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the nation. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.