

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Mr. President, Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, and Minority Leader McConnell:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." During times of challenge, we resolutely believe that the mantle of responsibility for caring for the poor and struggling falls squarely on the shoulders of government, not primarily on the charity of individual citizens. In such times of hardship and strife, government leaders should extend help to the needy, not advance the wealth of the most secure. With so many of our children and youth bearing the brunt of our nation's economic hardship, we resolutely believe that our policy leaders must consider the collective impact on our children when making spending and revenue choices.

Children make up a quarter of our nation's population, and they form the foundation of our nation's future. They also are some of our most vulnerable citizens. Currently, one in four children relies on food stamps, eight million children lack health insurance, 1.3 million students drop out of school every year, approximately 2.9 million children with special health care needs rely on Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program as their primary source of health care coverage, half of all black children in the United States and nearly two-thirds of low-income black children are covered by Medicaid, 43 percent of families with children report struggling to afford stable housing, and the poverty rate for children is approaching 25 percent, the largest generation to grow up in hard times since the depression.

As August 2nd quickly approaches and we debate raising the debt ceiling and the economic future of our nation, we must not forget about those who will be called on to create our future prosperity. If children are a national priority, we need to understand whether our spending and revenue choices disproportionately harm or protect them. Without this analysis, policymakers

and the public are limited in our ability to know how children fare in the proposals, and we risk weakening the foundation on which our youngest citizens grow into our leaders of tomorrow.

If we do not raise the debt ceiling, we know the effects for children and families will be catastrophic. The federal government will have to choose between paying children's health insurance and paying military families the benefits they are owed. Interest rates will rise, making it harder for families to get a mortgage or borrow money to send a child to college. Businesses will be squeezed with higher expenses, making it more difficult to create well paying jobs. Finally, the costs of everyday items like fuel and food will go up, making it even harder for individuals to provide for their families.

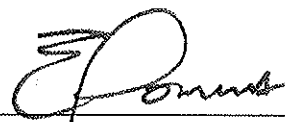
We know that deficit reduction cannot and should not be accomplished on the backs of children. We need to hold children and families harmless. Already, spending on children makes up less than 10 percent of total federal spending. A cut from this small slice will barely dent the deficit while having dire consequences for the people who need a helping hand. Decisions to cut particular programs must consider whether those cuts collectively and significantly harm low-income children and youth. Americans oppose balancing the budget on the backs of children and youth. In polling, voters overwhelmingly reject major cuts to K-12 education, child nutrition, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, Head Start, and college student loans.

Children are one of our most vulnerable groups of citizens. This is a time of crisis during which our most vulnerable citizens must be protected. Careful analysis of our spending decisions today as they affect children and youth will help us improve our efforts for tomorrow. It is in our nation's best interest to raise the healthiest, most educated, best-prepared children in the world for the challenges ahead. If we want to recapture the American Dream, we cannot afford to fail them. That is why we again ask you to hold children harmless in any deal to raise the debt ceiling.

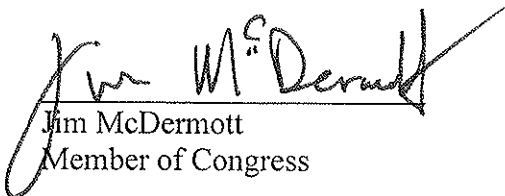
Sincerely,



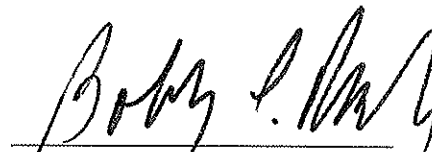
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



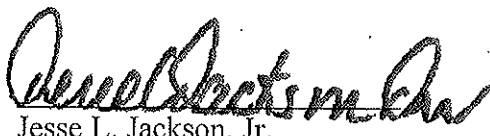
Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



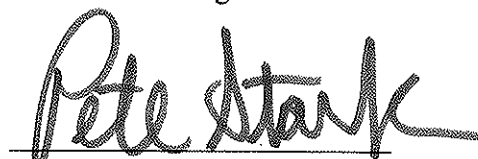
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

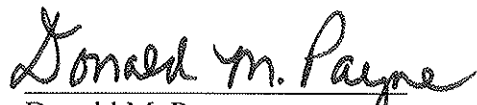


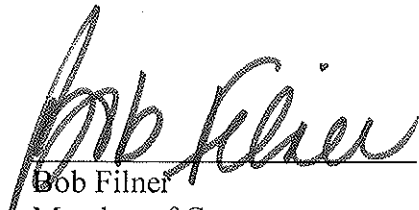
Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress

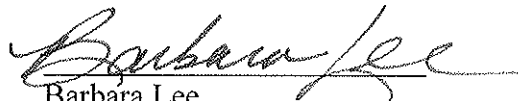


Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress

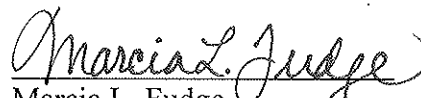

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

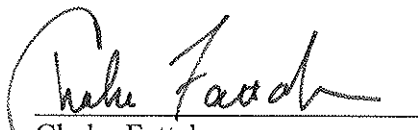

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

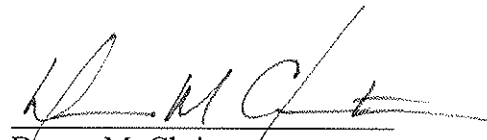

Bob Filner
Member of Congress

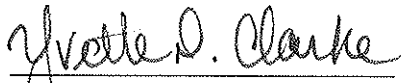

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

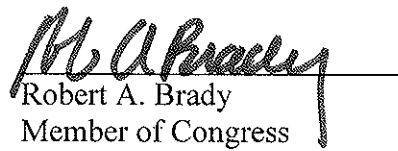

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

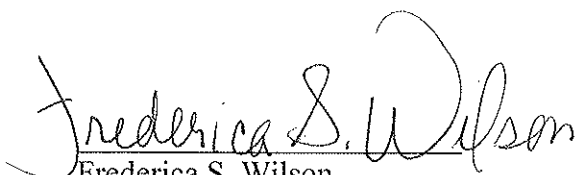

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

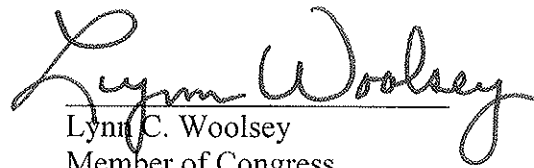

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress


Donna M. Christensen
Member of Congress

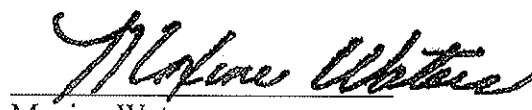

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress


Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress


Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress


Lynn C. Woolsey
Member of Congress


George Miller
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



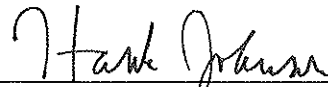
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



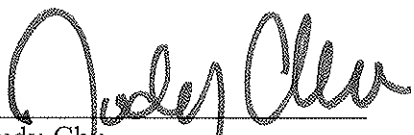
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



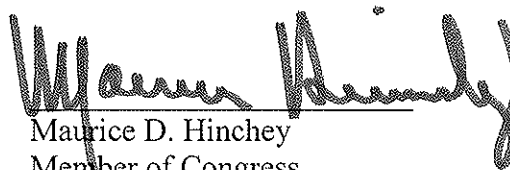
André Carson
Member of Congress



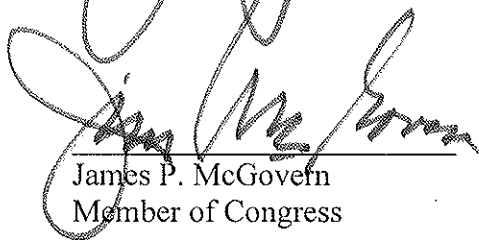
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



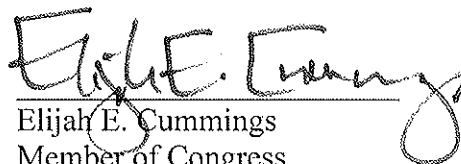
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



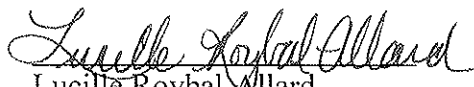
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



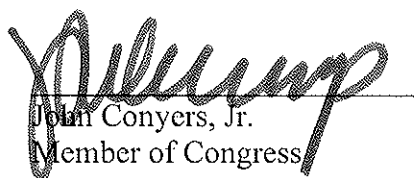
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



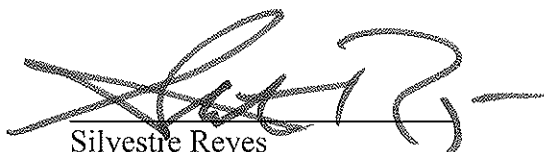
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



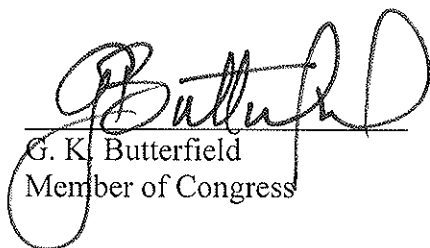
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



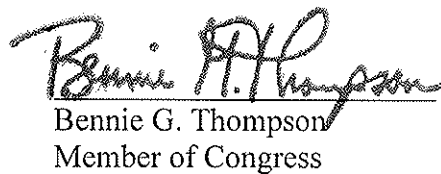
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



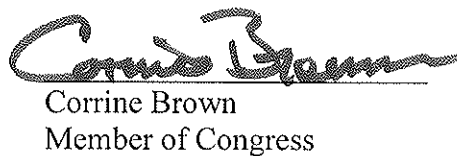
Silvestre Reyes
Member of Congress



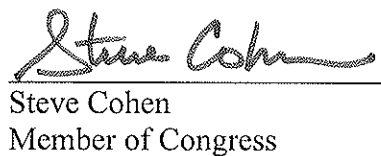
G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



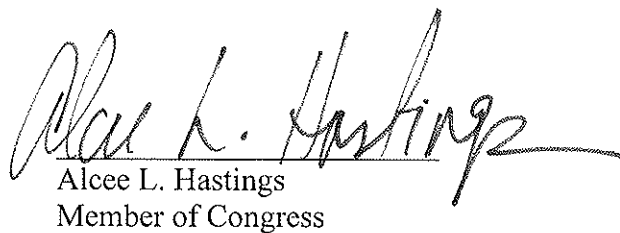
Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



John W. Olver
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress