The Leadership Conference

April 30, 2025

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 240 national civil and human rights advocacy organizations, we write to express our opposition, as the House and Senate negotiate reconciliation legislation, to proposed cuts and investments that would harm civil and human rights.

Recent budget resolutions passed by the House and Senate prioritize tax cuts favoring the wealthy while gutting vital services and protections for everyday Americans. The reconciliation process is primarily being used to extend the 2017 tax cuts for the benefit of the wealthiest 1 percent in this country, while proposing deep cuts to essential programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and student financial aid on which the majority of Americans rely. Simultaneously, the budget allocates significant increases in spending for large-scale, anti-immigrant operations, including expanded detention facilities and deportation operations that will also disrupt the lives of families and communities. Additionally, creating voucher schemes to subsidize private school tuition undermines the public schools that 90 percent of children attend. By using reconciliation to do little more than prioritize tax breaks for the rich, strip critical consumer protections, and advance inhumane policies, Congress risks undermining the wellbeing and rights of millions.

Reject cuts to Medicaid, which would eliminate a lifeline and critical care that benefits millions of Americans. Medicaid is a cornerstone of access and equity in our health care system, covering a quarter of all Americans. The program provides access to affordable medications and treatment, mental health services, and preventive care that help communities stay healthy. The massive cuts proposed in the House- and Senate-passed budget resolutions would devastate the health and financial security of more than 70 million Americans, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, rural communities, and families. These historic cuts—which could total at least $880 billion over the next decade—would disproportionately harm communities of color, nearly a third of whom rely on Medicaid for life-saving care, including half of all children of color. Slashing Medicaid to finance $4.5 trillion in tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy and large corporations is not only fiscally irresponsible, it is morally indefensible. Cuts to the program, including adding barriers to coverage and efforts to roll back Medicaid expansion, will threaten the health of people in every district and community across the country.

Resist cruel and shortsighted cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which would upend access to food for millions of low-income families, children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, rural communities, and people of

color. SNAP is one of the most effective anti-poverty tools we have, with nearly one in five children depending on it for daily nutrition. These cuts, also aimed at financing tax breaks for the wealthiest households and corporations, would gut a vital program that helps more than 40 million people and disproportionately impacts communities already facing economic hardship. Any cuts to SNAP will jeopardize the ability of individuals and families to put food on their tables. SNAP improves overall health outcomes, bolsters local economies, and helps close the wealth gap. Whether through slashing benefits, restricting eligibility, or shifting costs to states, the result would be the same: more hunger, more hardship, and greater inequality.

Oppose efforts to weaken borrower protections and refuse cuts to student financial aid and affordable repayment plans, which would cause deep and lasting harm to millions of students. Our debt-financed system of higher education has meant that for low-income and middle class students, access to higher education depends on access to affordable student loans with robust consumer protections, including through the gainful employment rule, the borrower defense to repayment rule, the 90/10 threshold, and closed school discharge. Approximately seven million students rely on Pell Grants each year to help afford college; slashing this funding would force low- and middle-income students to shoulder even more of the cost or forgo higher education altogether. More than 12 million borrowers are currently enrolled in income-driven repayment plans; eliminating or curtailing these plans would saddle them with unaffordable debt for decades. Approximately 750,000 borrowers, including teachers, nurses, veterans, and other public servants, have already benefited from Public Service Loan Forgiveness, and millions more are working toward it in critical sectors that contribute essential services directly to rural, suburban, and urban communities across the country. Cutting student aid, weakening borrower protections, and eliminating aspects of federal student loan programs will not only undermine college access and affordability, it would weaken the broader economy by limiting educational opportunity and social mobility.

Oppose efforts to eliminate funding for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which would strip millions of Americans of essential protections in the financial marketplace. Since its creation in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the CFPB has ensured consumer rights and financial fairness. It has returned billions of dollars to consumers, and held financial institutions accountable for discriminatory and deceptive practices. It plays a crucial role in enforcing civil rights laws like the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, ensuring that communities of color, low-income families, and vulnerable populations are protected from predatory lending and financial discrimination. Eliminating its funding would dismantle a key safeguard against the kinds of abuses that led to an economic collapse, disproportionately harming those already at risk.

Reject the massive funding sought to create a mass deportation machine that threatens to trample on civil rights and civil liberties. The administration has already used wartime authorities to lock up more than 200 people overseas without due process, and has planned to detain tens of thousands of immigrants at Guantanamo Bay and other military bases. It has revoked visas and locked up students purely on the basis of speech, in gross violation of the First Amendment. The administration wants to lock up countless more immigrants in facilities that are overcrowded and inhumane. At the same time, it wants to dramatically expand ICE's electronic surveillance programs. Allocating billions of dollars to

detention and deportation will not increase national security, but will instead institutionalize fear, erode civil rights and civil liberties, and inflict lasting harm on individuals and communities.

Reject the creation of voucher schemes that undermine funding for public education to subsidize private school tuition. Proposals like the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA) provide tax breaks to wealthy filers in order to prop up private school voucher schemes, avoiding the accountability and nondiscrimination obligations that come with public funding. Not only do these schemes undermine funding for the public schools on which 90 percent of children rely, they also redirect federal funding without providing the protections students are entitled to in public schools.

Finally, we continue to urge members not to advance a reconciliation bill, or any other budget or appropriations measure, until the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is thoroughly investigated and reined in. DOGE continues to operate with alarming secrecy and unauthorized access to sensitive personal data and use of AI systems from various agencies across the federal government. Federal courts have already issued injunctions curbing some of DOGE's overreach, citing violations of privacy laws and potential harm to millions of people, and Congress should intervene as well. Until DOGE's activities are fully transparent and accountable, proceeding with reconciliation legislation risks further compromising people's privacy and undermining public trust. Congress must ensure that taxpayer dollars and personal data are protected from misuse before moving forward with any fiscal measures.

Thank you for considering our views. If you have any questions, please contact me at jesselynmccurdy@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights