

Children and Families First: The Harsh Impact of the Sequester and Other Budget Cuts Since 2010

by U.S. Reps. Rosa DeLauro and George Miller
October 9, 2013



“Children and families are the first to experience the harsh impact of the sequester and other budget cuts enacted since 2010. Continued funding at this or lower levels ensures deep cuts to vital government services that help keep some of America's children and families out of poverty or provide critical services to those in poverty.”

We are now in the second week of the Republican shutdown of the federal government, a shutdown due solely to their insistence that the Affordable Care Act be weakened or repealed before they will allow an up-or-down vote on the Senate’s six-week Continuing Resolution (CR) to re-open the government.

Democrats in the House have made it clear that we would vote for the Senate bill even though we do not believe its funding level is nearly adequate. The CR’s funding level of \$986.5 billion reflects a compromise, negotiated between Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Reid, intended to allow calmer heads to prevail and negotiate a longer term budget solution.

President Obama was emphatic this week when he said that he believes the CR’s funding level is too low and will continue to cause harm to our economy. But he said would sign it into law to begin long-term budget negotiations to end the indiscriminate across the board spending cuts, known as the sequester, that are undermining economic growth, jobs, and vital services and replace them with a more balanced approach.

Through disheartening personal stories and stone cold numbers, this report makes clear that children and families are the first to experience the harsh impact of the sequester and other budget cuts enacted since 2010. Continued funding at this level or lower ensures deep cuts to vital government services that help keep some of America's children and families out of poverty or provide critical services to those in poverty.

The human cost of the sequester and other unbalanced budget cuts are not fully understood by either the public or Congress. As Congress debates future budgets in the coming weeks and months, it must make a choice – whether to continue the sequester and other deep budget cuts put in place over the last three years, further deepen these cuts, or enact a balanced approach that makes investments in our economy and the American people and enhances all Americans’ opportunity to succeed.

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We believe deficit reduction and economic growth can be achieved through a balanced approach. But the fact is that sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010 have placed the majority of the burden of deficit reduction on the backs of poor and middle class Americans. At the same time, Republicans in Congress have blocked at every opportunity enactment of public policies that would actually reduce government spending on at-risk populations, such as raising the minimum wage, paycheck fairness for working women, and paid family and medical leave. Restoring fairness to the American people through public policy will help reduce the deficit and grow the economy and should be a priority for Congress as we go forward with this discussion.

Budget Cuts Since 2010

The first round of cuts in 2011, which slashed about \$38 billion from non-defense spending, resulted in the elimination of 45 education programs totaling \$1.2 billion, and made harmful reductions to numerous other programs such as job training for youth and adults, poison control, preventive health, and mentoring for children of prisoners.

Then the last debt ceiling showdown in August of 2011 set caps on spending for each of the next ten years. These caps will result in a 40-year low for non-defense spending as a percentage of the economy. This includes funding for the following programs: medical and scientific research, health care for our veterans, support for educating our children (especially those with special needs), meals on wheels and other help for seniors, investment in infrastructure, protection against infectious diseases and foodborne illnesses, border security and law enforcement, and many other things.

On top of these caps, we now have sequestration, which further deepens these cuts. The sequestration cuts were not supposed to happen, because Congress was supposed to agree on an alternative. But, as of today, Republicans in Congress have refused to consider a balanced alternative to the sequester despite its negative impact. In fact, many Republicans are demanding that the cuts be locked in for future years – or at the very least that they be used as leverage to try to force other unpopular policy changes.

The following report lays out specific details of the effects of the funding cuts of the last three years on several programs and services important to children and families in real per-capita terms by adjusting for inflation and population growth.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) is the senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education. Rep. George Miller (D-CA) is the senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

Title I Grants for High-Poverty Schools

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Title I grants for high-poverty schools will be cut by 14 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$2.24 billion in real per-capita terms. Sequestration alone cut \$727 million from Title I in 2013, having a severe impact on the more than 23 million students and 55,000 schools served by the program.

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Continuing Title I funding at current levels would not merely reduce the level of services to our poorest and lowest achieving students, but would likely cause the complete elimination of some services to millions of students and thousands of schools. These cuts come after the number of children living in poverty has grown from 16.3 percent to 21.9 percent over the last decade. Public school K-12 enrollment has also been growing and is expected to set new records every year from 2011 through 2020.

Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Metropolitan School District, serving more than 55,000 students has eliminated all school social workers.

Sioux City, IA: Sioux City School District is laying off up to 12 Title I reading staff, 5 special education staff, and 15 Early Intervention staff funded through a federal grant.

Fairfield, CA: Many school districts are forced with layoffs resulting in larger class size. Travis Unified School District in Fairfield, California now boasts a high school average class size of 39.

Special Education (IDEA)

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Special Education will be cut by 14 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$1.73 billion in real per-capita terms. These cuts will require already overburdened state and local education agencies to pick up a higher share of the tab for educating our students with special needs.

Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Broward County eliminated five of 11 behavior specialists, 10 special education program specialists, and an assistive technology position.

Ft. Meyers, FL: Lee County eliminated approximately 100 paraprofessionals and staff specialists who supported the learning and instructional needs of students with disabilities.

Child Care & Development Block Grant

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, the Child Care and Development Block Grant program will be cut by 6 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$142 million in real per-capita terms. Already, only one in six eligible children receiving federal child care assistance. Since 2002, federal funding for child care assistance will have been cut by 26.6 percent. Working families consistently rate child care as one of their biggest challenges.

El Paso, TX: Despite a 1,520 child waitlist, The YWCA El Paso Del Norte Region has frozen enrollment due to an estimated -\$900,000 cut in CCDBG funds. Local authorities estimate 250 children added to the program waitlist per month.

Senior Nutrition

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Senior Nutrition will be cut by 15 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$131 million in real per-capita terms. Sequestration is estimated to have caused more than 5 million fewer congregate and

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home delivered meals served to low income seniors in 2013. These cuts come at a time when nearly 15 percent of seniors (8.3 million individuals) face the threat of hunger. From 2001 to 2010, the number of seniors threatened by hunger increased by 78%.

***La Crosse, Wisconsin:** Home-bound seniors wrote their members of Congress on paper plates about their need for home-delivered meals following reduced services. One wrote: "These meals are sometimes the only meal that I have a day. I don't drive, so I have to rely on others to get around to doctors' appointments. I only get 16 dollars a month for food." The county is serving approximately 6,000 fewer meals, both home-delivered or at 15 senior dining sites, thanks to sequester cuts.*

***Martinez, CA:** Contra Costa Senior Nutrition Program has been forced to cut 200 meals a day, resulting in a three to fivefold increase in the program waiting list.*

Early Childhood Education (Head Start)

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Head Start will be cut by 5.3 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$414 million in real per-capita terms. Sequestration in 2013 caused 57,000 children to lose access to Head Start services, in addition to significant service reductions such as shorter hours of operation and fewer staff. Continuing funding for Head Start at current levels will result in funding at 19 percent below the 2002 level.

***Taneytown, MD:** When a Head Start center was forced to close after -\$103,000 in cuts thanks to sequester, parents like Kelly Burford, were forced to quit their low-wage jobs to care for toddlers when faced with no affordable alternatives.*

***Martinez, CA:** Contra Costa County has already eliminated three full Head Start classrooms and reduced services for nearly 600 home-based and part-day Head Start children.*

After, Before, and Summer School Programs (21st Century Community Learning Centers)

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, afterschool and summer school programs will be cut by 15 percent. That is a cut of \$196 million in real per-capita terms. Between 2002 and 2010, the 21st Center Community Learning Centers program only had sufficient funding to support only one in three applicants, which has resulted in 36,000 communities and 3.6 million children and youth without access to afterschool programs. The cuts over the last three years have only made matters worse.

***Ukiah, CA:** Ukiah Unified School District was forced to eliminate its summer school program, replacing it with a two week intervention program, serving a limited number of students.*

***Springfield, OH:** The Springfield City School District has absorbed an estimated -\$1 million in federal funding through sequestration, resulting in the elimination of at least 40 tutoring positions.*

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Impact Aid

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Impact Aid will be cut by 13 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$185 million in real per-capita terms. The Impact Aid program compensates local school districts for the expense of educating “federally connected children” – meaning those who have a parent on active duty in the military, who live on Federal property, who live on certain Indian lands, or who reside in certain housing projects. There are more than 950,000 federally connected children in 1,300 school districts nationwide with a total enrollment of 11 million students. Every single school district that relies on Impact Aid support was hit by the 2013 sequestration cuts. Although some schools were able to absorb that cut in part through one-time cost savings related to delayed equipment purchases, cancellation of band and field trips, and leaving open staff positions unfilled when necessary, those options would not be available if sequestration is not addressed.

Lawton Public Schools, OK: The Superintendent has already cut 51 teachers, eliminated field trips and increased class size by 25 percent.

Randolph Field, TX: The Superintendent already reduced staff by 15 percent, cut raises and field trips and postponed the purchase of a school bus.

Geary County, KS: The Superintendent already eliminated the jobs of more than 100 paraprofessional educators, many of whom worked with children with disabilities.

Window Rock, AZ: Window Rock Unified School District has eliminated more than 40 positions and plans to close three schools in response to federal budget cuts.

Financial Assistance for College Students (Work Study & SEOG)

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Federal Work Study and SEOG Grants will be cut by 24 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$514 million in real per-capita terms. Since 2002, these programs have been cut by 35 percent, limiting access to student financial assistance to thousands of low-income college students.

California: 5,700 work-study students and 15,000 Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grant recipients will see -\$16.7 million in reductions between both programs. TRIO and GEAR-UP, two programs that benefit low-income high school and college students, will also be cut.

Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee lost -\$50,000 in federal work study funds, impacting 17 students who will not be afforded work-study employment for this school year.

Community Services Block Grant

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, Community Services Block Grants will be cut by 17 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$130 million in real per-capita terms. This funding is directed to community action agencies (CAAs) in poor neighborhoods, covering 96 percent of the nation’s counties. The range of services provided includes emergency services, housing, health care, food and nutrition, economic development,

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and education. CAAs are a primary source of direct support for the more than 46.5 million people who live in poverty in the United States. As the numbers of children and families living in poverty increases, cutting this program is the wrong direction, which is a true safety net for our most vulnerable citizens.

Salt Lake City, UT: Salt Lake Community Action Program closed its food pantry, one of five locations that serve more than 1,000 people every month.

Mental Health Services at Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

As a result of sequestration and other budget cuts since 2010, SAMHSA mental health services will be cut by 19 percent under the Continuing Resolution. That is a cut of \$203 million in real per-capita terms. The need for these services is so great—more than 67 percent of adults and nearly 80 percent of children who need mental health services do not receive the treatment they need. And, as we know this is happening as we are looking to grapple with mass shootings. Since the 2008 financial crisis, states have made more than \$4 billion in cuts to public mental health spending—the largest reduction since de-institutionalization in the 1960s and 1970s—leading to significant reductions in services to children and adults living with serious mental illness.

Pine Ridge, SD: The Oglala Sioux Tribe will not be able to hire two needed mental health service providers due to the sequestration cuts. Since the beginning of the year, there have been 100 suicide attempts in 110 days on Pine Ridge. According to the Indian Health Service, Native teens suicide rate is 3.5 times that of other Americans.