



**City of Bloomington
Office of the Common Council**

February 25, 2011

The Honorable Richard Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

On behalf of the City Council of Bloomington, Indiana, I urge you to reject the budget cuts to social services programming proposed in H.R.1, the 2011 Continuing Resolution passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. These cuts will devastate our community's most vulnerable and harm the collective well-being of our community.

As stewards of public money, we take seriously the duty to live within our means. However, this starts with making responsible cuts, not by threatening social services agencies that empower people and serve as engines of economic development. Indeed, compromising social services programming is not just bad government, it is bad business. For every dollar spent on social services, the community gets many more back through reduced crime, a lower drop-out rate, higher productivity, a more skilled workforce, higher family incomes, and reduced health care and social services costs. For every dollar cut, the collateral damage is exponential.

We've reviewed H.R. 1's proposal. However, in the absence of a Congressional assessment of the measure's impact on our community, the Bloomington City Council held a "Listening Session" on February 23, 2011 to hear from residents about what the proposed cuts mean for them. Below is a sample of what we heard.

- The cuts will burden local government. Agencies and individuals will look to local government for help as agencies lose federal funding and cut staff and programming. In these lean economic times, and in light of the State of Indiana's cap on property taxes, local budgets are already strapped.
- Cuts to Head Start and childcare programs mean that many residents will not be able to afford to work. When quality, affordable childcare is compromised, parents are often forced to quit their jobs to stay home with their children.

- The 44% cut in Community Services Block Grant Funds means that our community's South Central Community Action Program will be forced to make drastic cuts, including:
 - shutting down offices and curtailing the assistance it provides to the community's most needy;
 - selling the homes in its affordable housing program;
 - reducing the Energy Assistance Program, a program that ensures people can heat their homes during the winter. As energy costs continue to rise, more and more people in this community rely on this resource; and
 - eliminating the Monroe County Circles® Initiative – an innovative and highly-effective program connecting low-income residents with moderate-income residents to effect systemic social change.

The above is just a fraction of the feedback we've received from the community. The story of what these cuts mean to our community is best told in the voices of our residents. We encourage you to review the documents we are attaching to this letter: a DVD of our "Listening Session," a transcript of the session and e-mails sent to the Council on this issue.

It is imperative that government be fiscally prudent. It is vital that the budget be balanced. However, it must not be balanced on the backs of children, the elderly, the poor, the victimized, the marginalized and the disabled.

The Bloomington City Council is charged with protecting the "health, welfare and safety" of the community. It is in this capacity that we strongly urge you to **reject the cuts to social services initiatives of H.R. 1** and maintain funding for these vital programs, including: The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program; Community Health Centers; Head Start; Maternal and Child Health Block Grants; Family Planning; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services; Community Services Block Grant; Workforce Development; HUD Community Development Fund; the Housing Counseling Program; Legal Services; the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and AmeriCorps.

Sincerely,



Susan Sandberg, President
& At-Large Representative
Bloomington Common Council
Bloomington, Indiana