

Public Hearing
National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
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Written Testimony

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I appreciate the opportunity given to address the Deficit Commission on behalf of the Western PA Coalition for Single-Payer Healthcare, an all-volunteer grassroots organization dedicated to the preservation, improvement, and expansion of Medicare for All, and affiliated with the national organization Healthcare-NOW (www.healthcare-now.org).

I am not an economist, but I do my best to educate myself in order to make informed decisions. My understanding from opinions of noted economists is that in times of recession, the best policy is to increase spending and not to reduce the deficit. When the economy improves, the deficit will naturally lessen, as more people are employed and more taxes are paid.

Paul Krugman, in his column this week, renames the recession “The Third Depression,” and warns against foolhardy policy aimed at cutting the deficit now, which he claims will sink us into a long-lasting depression, with an increase in joblessness.

And yet, President Obama’s Executive Order of February 2010 instructs the Commission to develop a set of recommendations by December 1st of this year to reduce the deficit by 2015.

It seems we are on a path of self-destruction and that it is imperative that the public push back against such an effort. Given the publicized views of a number of members of the Commission, including the Co-Chairs, combined with President Obama’s insistence that so-called “entitlement” programs also be “on the table” for potential cuts, we fear the whittling away of our most cherished safety net—namely Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—at a time when more, not less, is needed to protect us from abject poverty and premature death.

As a psychiatric social worker for over 30 years, having worked in rural Appalachia, as well as urban and suburban locales, I know that poverty is widespread in this country and that even the so-called “privileged” need our safety net. No one is immune to economic and medical misfortune.

We urge you to protect our sacred safety net and turn your attention instead to reducing the disparities between the rich and poor in this country, Wall Street bailouts, the lapse of an estate tax in 2010, alternative ways to increase Social Security revenues by raising the cap on taxable income, and the billions being spent on two wars.

Respectfully submitted,

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