Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan:

As the fiscal year 2017 budget process begins, we urge you to reject proposals that would harm Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, or domestic discretionary programs that protect the financial and health well-being of American seniors and their families.

Our nation's seniors have made and continue to make valuable contributions to our society, and they deserve a dignified and secure retirement. Nearly 2 out of 3 seniors depend on Social Security for most of their income in retirement, a benefit which they earned by paying in to the system during their working lives. America's seniors face many common, but very personal challenges such as managing chronic illnesses and continuing to provide for their families. Medicare and Medicaid provide much needed lifelines to ensure that seniors have access to health care and long term care.

Domestic discretionary programs provide valuable resources for seniors as well. Each year, the Older Americans Act provides more than 11 million people with services like home-delivered and congregate meals – known as Meals on Wheels. The Older Americans Act also ensures seniors have transportation to medical appointments, the grocery store, adult day care and more. Five years ago, as Chair of the Budget Committee, you put forward the Roadmap for America's Future, a budget proposal that, if enacted, would have had profound and harmful impacts on this and future generations of older Americans. That proposal would have provided more tax breaks for the wealthiest among us while eliminating traditional Medicare, raising the age of Medicare eligibility and drastically increasing out-of-pocket costs. It would have turned Medicaid (the largest payer of long-term care services and supports) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, which provides food assistance to over 4 million seniors) into block grants with sharply reduced funding. It would have capped non-defense discretionary spending at 2009 levels through 2019, jeopardizing critical nutrition, housing, elder justice and caregiver assistance services for millions of seniors and their families. Many of those proposals – as well as threatened reductions to Social Security's earned benefits -- have been contained in the budget resolutions subsequently offered by the Republican majority and the Republican Study Conference.

At a time when senior poverty is on the rise, median senior income is $24,500, and many of our older constituents are still struggling from the loss of retirement savings and the erosion of defined benefit plans, Congress should not pass a budget that includes the harmful cuts included in the Roadmap for America's Future and subsequent Republican budgets. We call on you to reverse course and work with us to adopt budget policies that provide security for today's seniors and for the generations of seniors to come.

Sincerely,

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House Democratic Caucus
Co-Chair, Seniors Task Force

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House Democratic Caucus
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