

PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Dear President Obama and Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) is acutely aware that the budget cuts occurring and under consideration in communities, cities, states, and at the federal level are contributing to even more anxiety, depression, and trauma for the millions of U.S. families and children living in poverty (or nearly so) since many of the cuts are aimed squarely at them.

Scientific research clearly shows that living with the conditions of poverty, homelessness, and inequality can worsen a host of psychological and developmental indicators, including the normal growth of the developing brain, the ability to learn both at school and in the community, and the personal and social resources to get along with others at work and in other settings.

The research also shows that widespread poverty and inequality pose problems for all of society -- through increased risks for mass levels of low educational achievement; limits on the ability to maintain gainful, tax-paying employment; heightened violence and crime in communities; and more pervasive physical and psychological illnesses. Reducing poverty and inequality, then, actually benefits *everyone* through lesser costs and improved social and community well-being.

PsySR's group of psychologists and allied students and professionals now are even more concerned with myriad recent reports of political leaders around the nation seeking to further cut programs that provide invaluable, life-improving services to indigent children and families. These include Head Start, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and housing voucher programs. In many cases, those cuts are in conjunction with other changes aimed at increasing the wealth of individuals (and corporations) who already have more than enough means necessary for engendering healthy human development and environments for themselves. Sadly, these priorities reflect a society that still blames the poor for their plight when it is our socioeconomic structuring that truly allows poverty and inequality to thrive.

Given these distinct, disturbing realities, we respectfully ask that you consider the long-term, life-harming implications of further reducing supports and services to the poor. Such reductions will not only lead to conditions that are likely to devastate untold millions of lives but will also have implications for all of us as they increase the likelihood that more children will grow into adults who have learning, social, and behavioral problems. We thank you for becoming aware of how your actions to improve services and supports for low-income Americans can help *all* of society even in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Roy Eidelson (eidelson@psysr.org) and Steve Shapiro (sshapiro@jhmi.edu),
on behalf of Psychologists for Social Responsibility

For more information about the implications of the failure to care better for our low-income citizens, please visit: www.psysr.org/poverty-inequality. Thank you.

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