

November 10, 2011

Dear Members of the Super Committee:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care and the undersigned organizations urge you to reduce the federal deficit in a fair and balanced way that does not take away essential services from those who depend upon them - often for their most basic needs in life. These services - the majority of which are funded by Medicaid and the Older Americans Act - include long-term services and supports for individuals both at home and in nursing homes, ombudsman program services that advocate for quality care for nursing home residents, federal and state regulation and oversight of nursing homes, and more.

Cutting Medicaid will have a devastating effect on older adults and persons with disabilities. Currently Medicaid is the single largest source of long-term care coverage in the nation. Nearly three million seniors and people with disabilities receive Medicaid services that allow them to stay in their own home or community. At the same time 70% of nursing home residents rely on Medicaid to pay for facility care which costs \$75,000 a year, or substantially more. Reducing Medicaid funding will make it harder for the elderly and people with disabilities to qualify for the nursing home benefits or home and community-based services they need.

In the words of one daughter:

"I'm the legal guardian of my parents, on Medicaid, in a nursing home. They are totally incapacitated. All of their income, except for \$35/month, goes to their care. But this doesn't come close to the amount required. Thank God for Medicaid. What would our poorest do without it? Are we headed back to the days of Dickens?"

Reducing both Medicaid and Older Americans Act funding will negatively impact not only access to long-term services and supports, but also the quality of care. From decades of experience, we know that funding cuts will put nursing home residents at increased risk.

Decreased provider payments will result in long-term facilities cutting staff and wages for workers, further compromising quality of care. Reduced Medicaid funds will also mean fewer inspections and less oversight of nursing homes, and if Medicaid were changed into a block grant to states, the standards that almost all nursing homes are expected to meet, including resident protections and rights, could be eliminated in return for "flexibility."

Nursing home quality would be diminished by reductions in support for the Older Americans Act, which funds the long-term care ombudsman program. Ombudsmen represent vulnerable people who are denied their rights or receiving poor care. The following example illustrates how important the ombudsman program is to residents:

"One of our staff ombudsmen visited a nursing home and felt that something was not right. So we put a volunteer ombudsman in the home. One of the residents pulled her aside and said she couldn't stand to hear 'them' hitting 'John' (another resident) anymore. 'John' acknowledged that one of his caregivers was hitting him on the head, and the other was threatening him. When 'John' agreed to let us intervene, our investigators found that two caregivers were verbally abusing and hitting him. They asked the administrator to remove the caregivers immediately. When our ombudsman visited later, the workers had been removed, and 'John' was clean, well-dressed and looked like a new man."

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.



The National
CONSUMER VOICE
for Quality Long-Term Care
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Without ombudsman presence and intervention, the physical and verbal abuse of “John” would most likely have continued. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a critical resource in every state. However, federal cuts to this already underfunded program would gut its services to nursing home residents for whom it is a lifeline and sometimes the only voice they have.

The older adults and people with disabilities we have described in this letter need the support of the government for quality care on a daily basis. Please don't ask them to carry an unfair share of the deficit burden, while requiring nothing from wealthy Americans and corporations.

Sincerely,

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
Kentucky Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman
Tennessee Commission on Aging & Disability
Connecticut Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils
AGE
Gemmer Care Management
LTC Ombudsman Services of San Luis Obispo County
National Elderly Advocacy
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
Becket, Inc.
Trinity Manor, Dodge City, Kansas
Ombudsman/Advocacy Services of Inyo & Mono Counties
State of Alaska Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman
Advocates for Nursing Home Residents
Birmingham Green Family Council
Delaware State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
District Long-Term Care Ombudsman, East Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Genesis La Plata Center Family Council
Foundation Aiding the Elderly
Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform
Long Term Care Community Coalition
Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
NALLTCO: National Association of Local Long Term Care Ombudsmen
Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
NHVC, Inc
Georgia Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
PASSAGES
Stanislaus Long Term Care Ombudsman
Texas Long-term Care Ombudsman Program
North Dakota State Ombudsman Program
New Mexico Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Indiana Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman
New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

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Legal Counsel for the Elderly
New Hampshire Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman
Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Northwest Washington State Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Ark-Tex Area Agency on Aging Ombudsman
Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass, Inc.
Kings County Commission on Aging
Denver Regional Council of Governments Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Long Term Care Ombudsman Program at MHA Westchester County
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program--Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties, WA
Ombudsman Program Arizona
Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa
Oklahoma Ombudsman Program
Napa Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Family Council of the Hood River Care Center
Springvale Terrace Family Council
Tubman Elder Care & Rights Center (Formerly ElderCare Rights Alliance)
Our Mother's Voice
Community Coalition for Older Adults
Family Council Resources
Central Alabama Aging Consortium
Family Caregiver Alliance
SD Nurse Consulting & Associates
Cogito Capital Group
Hebrew Home Family Council
TEAM: Walkin' For Mom (Alzheimer's Association Fundraising Team)
Lake and Mendocino County Ombudsman Program
East Tennessee Human Resource Agency
NARFE (National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association)
Kalamazoo County Advocates for Senior Issues
Levin & Perconti
Pro Seniors, Inc.
McIntosh Trail Long-term Care Ombudsman Program
Office of the State LTC Ombudsman, Kansas
Unitarian Universalist House Outreach Program
Direct Care Alliance
New Mexico Aging & Long Term Services Department
Kentucky Advocate Association
Professional Counseling Center
New York City Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Johnson County (Iowa) Task Force on Aging
Office of the Connecticut State Long Term Care Ombudsman
Ombudsman Services of Northern California
Montana Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

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Humboldt Del-Norte Ombudsman Program
Virginia Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association
Visiting Angels of Lincoln Trail
RSVP
Kentucky Initiative for Quality Nursing Home Standards

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