Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2014

Douglas W. Elmendorf
Director
Congressional Budget Office
Ford House Office Building, Fourth Floor
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Director Elmendorf:

We write to you to request that the Congressional Budget Office prepare an analysis of the impact on poverty in our country under the budget resolution reported out of the House Budget Committee on April 2, 2014 by Chairman Paul Ryan. Our budgets serve as an important tool for expressing Congress's level of support for domestic anti-poverty initiatives and prioritizing investments in opportunity. Such an analysis will aid Members of Congress in making an informed decision on whether Chairman Ryan's budget will improve or worsen the state of poverty in America.

An analysis of how Chairman Ryan's budget resolution would affect poverty in our nation would help Congress understand the full impact its severe domestic spending cuts would have on the most vulnerable Americans. Specifically, funding for nondefense discretionary accounts, a category of spending that includes public education, home heating and rental assistance, nutrition assistance, health, and other critical investments, would be dramatically reduced by Chairman Ryan's budget resolution. The budget resolution would shift Medicare costs onto seniors, restrict funding for a Medicaid program that largely benefits lower income seniors, and repeal the Affordable Care Act's supports currently allowing low and middle income Americans to get health insurance. These and other policies will undoubtedly impact millions of Americans living in or near poverty today. If possible, the report may include a projection of individual and family incomes that would decrease below the poverty threshold and increase above the poverty threshold as a result of policy changes proposed in Chairman Ryan's budget resolution.

At the same time, reduced investments in policies that help middle class families stay afloat could lead to an increase in the number of people who may need to rely on countercyclical safety net programs. Congress would benefit from an accounting of these costs when considering Chairman Ryan's budget resolution.

Understanding the constraints under which the CBO functions, should completing such an analysis be impractical, we would appreciate a better understanding of the scope of analysis the CBO can provide on poverty with regard to policy proposals of this magnitude.

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With that said, we ask that you look carefully at what Chairman Ryan's budget resolution would do for those Americans who face hunger and homelessness, especially children, our veterans, and the elderly. Such an analysis of the broader costs of adopting the policies in Chairman Ryan's budget resolution would help Congress understand precisely what is at stake for the most vulnerable Americans.

Sincerely yours,

STENY H. HOYER
Democratic Whip

BARBARA LEE
Chair, Democratic Whip Task Force on
Poverty, Income Inequality & Opportunity