



October 15, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

As our nation enters another week of the government shutdown and the debt ceiling looms, we undersigned Jewish organizations urge you and your colleagues to come together to fully reopen the federal government and ensure the United States has the means to pay all of our financial obligations, and take steps so we do not find ourselves in the same uncertain situation repeatedly. Although we acknowledge the ongoing negotiations you and your colleagues are conducting, the resulting uncertainty – crisis after crisis – is too much for our communities to withstand.

We are concerned not only about the immediate effects of the government shutdown on human needs and opportunity programs. We also are deeply concerned about the long-term impact that the shutdown will have on our communities – from the families that rely on government services, to the businesses that require economic certainty, to the safety and security of our nation and the world. The pain already felt by ordinary Americans from the shutdown would be amplified by a debt crisis.

Already, there are no additional funds for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Even before the current budget crisis, our federal government's anti-poverty programs only reached a fraction of the people needing them. Now that the government shutdown has jeopardized funding for federal assistance programs, many Americans are forced to choose between essential needs like food, safe and affordable housing, heating, and medical care.

The shutdown has also harmed crucial opportunity programs that help move individuals and families out of poverty and that confront inadequate education, housing, healthcare, and illiteracy. Head Start programs, in particular, have been among the first programs affected by the shutdown, turning away thousands of eligible children.

The effects of the shutdown are not limited to domestic programs. We believe the shutdown has impacted our country's ability to stay vigilant against threats and fully engage throughout the world. For example, we believe the threat of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons is a matter of the gravest concern and utmost urgency to the world. The shutdown has limited the critical role the

Treasury Department plays in implementing effective sanctions that are designed to facilitate a peaceful resolution to Iran's ongoing development of nuclear weapons.

These are only a few of the examples of the consequences we face from the government shutdown. The problems facing our communities require broad and comprehensive solutions. The government shutdown disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable. Failing to increase the debt ceiling would be unprecedented and has the potential to disrupt social security payments, veterans medical assistance, mental health services, military preparedness, law enforcement, and other core functions of government.

Now is the time to do the hard work of building consensus and finding solutions. On behalf of the communities we serve, we call on you to work cooperatively with your colleagues in Congress to reopen the federal government and increase the debt ceiling. The issues we face as a nation are critically important, and Congress must act now to unwind the ongoing federal fiscal catastrophe.

Sincerely,