

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

March 6, 2019

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Yarmuth:

As required by Section 301(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-344) and pursuant to your letter of February 5, 2019, this letter transmits the Views and Estimates of the Committee on Ways and Means on those aspects of the Federal budget for Fiscal Year 2020 that fall within the Committee's jurisdiction.

The Committee plans to focus on advancing policies that put American families first in all areas of our jurisdiction. As discussed in more detail below, our priorities include ensuring that our tax and trade systems benefit middle-income Americans and small businesses; affordable and accessible health care for all Americans; innovative solutions to ensure that our infrastructure is safe and efficient; leveling the playing field to provide real opportunities for families struggling to get ahead; and protecting Medicare and Social Security.

I. Legislative Issues with Budgetary Impact

- A. Health Care – The Committee will work to advance policies that improve health care coverage and affordability for all Americans. In particular, we will seek out solutions that lower the cost to the patient and federal government for prescription medicines. Of critical importance is improving the individual market. Through oversight of Administrative actions and advancement of legislation, the Committee will work to lower costs, improve coverage for Americans and protect individuals with pre-existing conditions. Likewise, for those Americans affected by “surprise medical bills,” the Committee will seek to address the root causes and stop this practice entirely. Also importantly, the Committee will work to address Medicare's solvency, gaps in Medicare coverage and improve health security for older Americans and people living with disabilities on Medicare. The Committee will consider policies in the Medicare program to drive value and ensure that patients continue to have access to quality health care providers.

Through all of these initiatives, the Committee will examine the impact social determinants of health and health disparities have on affordability and access to care and pursue policies to address inequality and encourage upward mobility throughout the health system and in the economy as a whole.

- B. Social Security – The Committee will work to protect and strengthen our nation’s most important insurance system, Social Security, so it remains a secure foundation of economic security for retirees and for families who have lost a breadwinner to death or a severe disability. It will reject proposals to reduce Social Security benefits, either through proposed cuts in the President’s budget request or through regulatory or administrative changes that deny benefits to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria in the law. It will work with the Appropriations Committee to ensure that the Social Security Administration (SSA) is provided sufficient administrative resources to enable SSA to provide prompt and accurate service to beneficiaries, including reducing excessive wait times for disability appeals hearings, responding to phone calls, serving customers in local field offices, investing in information technology modernization, and meeting its statutory obligation to mail benefit-estimate statements to taxpayers. Additionally, the Committee will continue to oversee SSA operations to ensure that all beneficiaries, workers, and their families are able to access their earned benefits.
- C. Tax Policy – The Ways and Means Committee will prioritize tax policies that benefit middle class families and those working to climb up into the middle class. The Committee recognizes that for more than two decades, even though the economy has grown significantly, middle class expenses like housing, health care, and higher education have steadily become more expensive. The tax code influences nearly every aspect of middle class economic struggles: wage levels, housing and health care markets, access to higher education and worker training, and the cost of raising children. The Ways and Means Committee will examine policies that deliver economic growth that supports and grows America’s middle class. These worker-focused policies will include infrastructure investment, retirement savings, workforce development, access to higher education, and small business growth. In addition, the Committee will continue to review other tax matters, including administration of the tax laws by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and will closely scrutinize the revenue recommendations contained in the President’s Fiscal Year 2020 Budget.
- D. Trade – The Committee seeks to ensure that U.S. trade policies and practices, including in coordination with other economic policies, work to the benefit of regular Americans today and in the future. This includes prioritizing the enforcement of U.S. trade laws, trade agreements, and preference programs. The Committee also intends to review and work with the Administration on the terms

of the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), known as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), including its plans and resources for its implementation. The Committee will exercise robust oversight over the Administration's efforts to negotiate with foreign countries to reduce or eliminate restrictions on trade with the United States, including ongoing or soon-to-be initiated negotiations with China, Japan, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and any other potential partners. The Committee will also oversee Administration efforts and initiatives to engage in negotiations and other reform efforts at and under the auspices of the WTO. The Committee intends to consider updates and enhancements in legislation to reauthorize: Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act, which expires in June 2021; Trade Adjustment Assistance, which expires in June 2021; U.S. preference programs (including the Generalized System of Preferences, which expires in December 2020 and the Caribbean Basin Trade Preferences Act (CBTPA), which expires in September 2020); and the Miscellaneous Tariff Bill, which expires December 2020. Finally, the Committee will continue its oversight over the budgets and activities of agencies within its jurisdiction, including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. International Trade Commission.

- E. Worker and Family Support – The Committee will work to level the playing field for Americans who are struggling, including expanding access to quality, affordable child care for working parents and grandparents, providing necessary paid family and medical leave to working Americans of all ages who need it, and improving career pathways for individuals who face barriers to employment and economic mobility. The Committee will continue to oversee the implementation of the bipartisan Family First Prevention Services Act and consider any needed policies to smooth implementation or improve child welfare services to better protect children and support families. The Committee will also support and oversee the expansion of services to help unemployed workers return to work more quickly. The Committee will also act to prevent any lapse in funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, the Child Care Entitlement to States, or the Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood grants, which are currently set to expire this year.

II. The Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

The Committee will review the President's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget when it is received. This review will provide an opportunity to conduct much-needed oversight of the Republican tax law and other Administration policies, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of any legislative solutions proposed by the Administration.

III. Public Debt Limit

The current debt limit suspension period ended March 1. We have requested, but not yet received, a specific Administration estimate for how much the statutory debt limit will need to be increased to accommodate declines in projected revenue or how long “extraordinary measures” will allow us to meet our obligations without a change in the debt limit. The Committee expects the Treasury Secretary to testify at a public hearing before the Committee very soon, and looks forward to receiving more specific information from the Administration at that time so that we can enact debt limit legislation to protect the full faith and credit of the United States.

The Committee on Ways and Means looks forward to working with the Committee on the Budget to increase opportunity for the American people and restore integrity and accountability to the federal government.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Neal
Chairman