

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

...don't cut it.

August 31, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
372 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Danny Davis
2159 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Neal and Chairman Davis:

The Strengthen Social Security Coalition (SSSC) consists of over 350 national and state organizations, representing over 50 million Americans, including seniors, women, people with disabilities, workers, people of color, veterans, and others. We strongly urge you to include a number of important Supplemental Security Income (SSI) improvements in the upcoming reconciliation package.

As you know, during his campaign President Biden promised to increase the SSI federal maximum benefit level; update and index the resource limits; update and index the income disregards; eliminate the marriage penalties; and eliminate the In-Kind Support and Maintenance provisions. All of those crucially important provisions are included in the SSI Restoration Act of 2021, which has been cosponsored by 49 members – more than 20 percent of the Democratic caucus.

While the costs of most of those reforms are relatively inexpensive, when compared to the proposed overall cost of the reconciliation bill, they will nevertheless have an enormous impact. SSI is a lifeline to eight million low-income seniors and people with disabilities, including over a million children.

Five decades after SSI was signed into law, most recipients live in poverty and struggle every day to make ends meet. Congress last increased SSI's asset limits in 1984. It has never increased its income disregards in its fifty-year history. SSI's complicated, intrusive, and, in fact, punitive rules are extremely costly to administer. In short, SSI needs to be improved, as the President has promised to do – and as Congress has an historic opportunity to do through reconciliation.

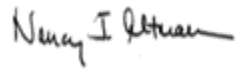
The day President Nixon signed SSI into law, he said that the new program would “mean a big step out of poverty and toward a life of dignity and independence” for recipients. The improvements that President Biden has promised would have an even

larger step. They would raise benefits above poverty and free recipients from current provisions that demean them and keep them dependent.

We appreciate how committed you are to improving the lives of the nation's seniors and people with disabilities. We look forward to celebrating the passage of a reconciliation bill that improves their lives through the inclusion of these much-needed SSI improvements.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nancy I. Altman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nancy Altman
Chair, Strengthen Social Security Coalition