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AARP to the President: "Medicare is not a welfare program."

WASHINGTON—AARP Senior Vice President Joyce Rogers offered the following statement in response to President Obama's indication that he would support means-testing Medicare as part of a debt ceiling deal. AARP is focused on protecting Social Security and Medicare for the millions of beneficiaries who have paid into the systems over their working lives. Rogers' statement follows:

"Medicare is not a welfare program. Seniors pay into Medicare their entire working lives based on the promise that they'll have secure health coverage when they retire. Applying a means test for their earned benefits would erode the popular support that has sustained these programs for years and made them so effective in helping older households.

"The small minority of seniors who are wealthy also contributed more to these programs throughout their working lives, and continue to pay higher taxes in retirement to support them. Also, in contrast to plans for those under age 65, premiums for Medicare Part B and Part D already are pegged to income.

"We believe the right way to strengthen Medicare is to improve the quality and lower the cost of care throughout the health care system. Simply shifting the bill to seniors would be like squeezing one end of a balloon – it does nothing to improve health care quality or combat the real problem of rising costs."

For more information, please contact AARP Media Relations at (202) 434-2560 or visit www.aarp.org/protectseniors.

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