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April 5, 2011

Contact: [Sadie Kliner](#)

202.986.2600

Ryan Proposal Aims to Advance Punishing, Ideologically-Driven Agenda that Would Balance Budget on Backs of Women, Children, Seniors, and Low-Income Americans

Statement of Judith L. Lichtman, Senior Advisor, National Partnership for Women & Families

“The budget proposal offered by House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan today, on behalf of the Republican leadership, is an ideologically-driven, callous assault on women, children, seniors and everyone who is low-income or is struggling during these tough economic times. We all recognize that we need to strengthen the economy and reduce the federal deficit, but Americans want to do that in ways that are fair and protect the most vulnerable people in our communities. The Ryan proposal does just the opposite, using the deficit as an excuse to advance a punishing and pitiless agenda.

The Ryan proposal is short-sighted and would impede our fragile economic recovery. It would slash job training and student loan programs, making it much more difficult for workers and young people to prepare for the jobs of the future.

It also slashes crucial programs to help families devastated by the recession, the hungry and the homeless by reducing food stamps and housing assistance at a time when millions of Americans rely on these programs for their survival.

It would cause deep and painful harm to women, who live longer, earn less, rely more on Social Security, and receive smaller Social Security benefits. This budget starts with the misguided Fiscal Commission proposals to change Social Security, including benefit changes that would disproportionately harm women. It must be rejected.

In this proposal, again, Rep. Ryan calls for repeal and defunding of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), based on erroneous and disproven claims that it will increase health care costs. Given time to work, the ACA will help address the skyrocketing costs that have been making health care inaccessible for decades. It will make care more affordable and move Medicare and Medicaid toward a more value-based system that advances high quality, effective, patient-centered care. These changes to payment and delivery will help to control costs over time without slashing the essential benefits that vulnerable Americans rely on.

The Ryan proposal ignores the fact that Medicare returns more in benefits per dollar than private health insurance. While there is no question that Medicare could and should be more effective and efficient, turning it into a voucher program would put millions of future retirees – many of whom will have multiple chronic health conditions – at huge financial risk. Moving Medicare away from a social insurance program to a voucher system is nothing more than a cost shift onto older Americans and renege on a commitment to America’s retirees.

We will do all we can to urge Congress to reject this irresponsible budget proposal. It should be

dead upon arrival in both chambers and lawmakers should waste no time in beginning work on a fair, responsible budget that will address the deficit and protect the most vulnerable among us.

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The National Partnership is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting access to quality health care, fairness in the workplace, and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family.