



April 10, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Arc of the United States, I urge you to vote no on H.J. Res. 2 which proposes a balanced budget amendment (BBA) to the Constitution of the United States. We believe a BBA would result in severe and lasting harm to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For more than 65 years, The Arc has worked to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the supports and services they need to live as independently and productively as possible. Through our network of over 650 state and local chapters, we have helped to create basic protections and opportunities for the more than 7 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the U.S.

H.J. Res 2 would prohibit total outlays for a fiscal year from exceeding total receipts for that fiscal year, unless Congress authorizes the excess by a three-fifths roll call vote of each chamber. It also requires a three-fifths roll call vote of each chamber of Congress to increase the public debt limit and a majority roll call vote of each chamber to increase revenue. These requirements could only be waived in cases of war or serious military threat to national security.

People with disabilities often face multiple barriers to employment and many have complex medical needs and very low incomes. Consequently, many rely on federal mandatory and discretionary programs to live in the community and avoid costly and unwanted institutionalization. Among the most critical programs are Social Security old-age, survivors, and disability insurance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, and Medicare:

**Social Security and SSI** provide a basic standard of living for many people with disabilities to live independently in the community and meet their basic needs, such as food, housing, and transportation.

**Medicaid** provides essential health care and long-term services and supports for many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Medicare** is the source of health care coverage for people using Social Security, including many people with disabilities.

The Arc is very concerned that if H.J. Res. 2 were to be enacted, essential programs would be in grave risk, including Social Security, SSI, Medicaid and Medicare.

For example, the BBA prohibits spending from exceeding revenues collected in *that year*. But by law, Social Security operates with trust funds that collect and store dedicated payroll contributions. Trust fund reserves can be used to help to pay for projected population needs in future years. Under a BBA, Social Security's current reserves of \$2.9 trillion would not be

available to help pay benefits, since almost all of these funds were collected in prior years. Similarly, Medicare uses two trust funds that allow the Medicare Trustees to build up reserves and plan for and fund future needs under the program.

Excluding Social Security or Medicare from a BBA would simply shift a greater proportion of cuts to other essential mandatory programs (such as Medicaid and SSI) and discretionary programs such as education, employment, housing, transportation, and family support that provide the wrap around services necessary for community living.

The Arc is deeply concerned that a BBA of any sort would force deep cuts to essential programs that enable people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live in the community and even, to survive. We urge you to oppose a balanced budget amendment that would likely result in a “cuts only” approach to dealing with our fiscal challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Berns".

Peter V. Berns  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Arc of the United States