November 4, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker and Majority Leader Hoyer,

We write to you requesting you permit the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to fulfill its responsibility and publish a full cost estimate for the fiscal year 2022 reconciliation bill, H.R. 5376, the Build Back Better Act, before the House of Representatives considers and votes on this legislation.

For months, Congress has been engaged in ongoing debate about what will be included in the reconciliation bill and its overall cost. While we the undersigned have serious concerns with the portions of the bill that we have seen, certainly we should all be able to agree that Members of Congress should have a full accounting of how this bill will impact spending, deficits, and debt now and in the future. To date, CBO has provided estimates for less than ten percent of the bill reported by the Budget Committee. Based on the available estimates, three authorizing committees have exceeded their respective reconciliation targets.

As we approach the end of the year without having completed the annual appropriations process as well as facing a looming debt ceiling cliff, it would be unconscionable to commit to the purported trillions of dollars that the reconciliation bill might cost without knowing its true price tag. Given that the price of this bill makes it the most expensive piece of legislation in American history, it is imperative Members of Congress are not asked to vote on it until a full cost estimate is available for their review.

The Administration claims that the plan will add nothing to the federal deficit. Given the policies that may or may not be included in the final package at this point, we find that difficult to believe. According to some estimates, the current form of the reconciliation bill would add as much as $3 trillion to our national debt, which already sits at more than $28 trillion.

Our nation is also experiencing record levels of inflation, and many economists cite increased federal spending as a root cause. Inflation is on pace to exceed 7 percent this year – the highest it’s been in forty years. Americans are facing increased costs for everyday necessities – gas prices are up 58 percent, meat prices are up 14.5 percent, clothing prices are up 10.5 percent, and coffee prices are up 6.1 percent. All Americans are experiencing this inflation crisis, particularly working-class families. As Congress considers spending trillions more of American taxpayer
dollars, then as stewards of the public trust we should not commit to do so until a full accounting
of this legislation’s potential fiscal impact is available, both in the short and over the long term.
Giving the CBO time to provide Congress with this critical analysis will ensure we know the
potential impact of this legislation before making this critical decision.

Allowing the CBO to do its job before a vote on this legislation will help answer these questions.
Both the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 and House Rule XIII
require a formal score of this bill prior to House consideration. It would be both imprudent and a
disservice to Congress and the American people to ignore these requirements given the broad
scope and reported cost of this legislation.

We thank you for your consideration of this request and hope you will give Congress and the
American people a chance to know what the reconciliation bill will cost before voting on it.

Sincerely,

Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress

Jason Smith
Member of Congress

Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader

Steve Scalise
Republican Whip

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