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APHSA Urges Super Committee to Continue Work until Deal Made Sequestration Cuts Deemed Not the Answer

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is urging the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to continue meeting beyond its November 23 deadline if that is necessary to resolve its differences and report out recommendations for a federal deficit solution. APHSA, which represents appointed state health and human service agency commissioners, this week wrote the co-chairs of the super committee imploring the committee to work out a deal.

In the letter to Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), APHSA's executive director, Tracy Wareing, noted that there is nothing in the Budget Control Act that prohibits the Joint Select Committee from continuing work after November 23, 2011 in order to meet the December 23, 2011 deadline for Congress to pass a deficit reduction bill. If a bill is not passed, it would trigger deep across-the-board cuts to federal programs through the process of sequestration.

"It is APHSA's view that sequestration is not an appropriate or acceptable solution to the deficit situation facing this country," Wareing wrote. "Blindly allowing sequestration to take affect has the potential of producing some highly undesirable and unintended consequences that can make it almost impossible to administer these programs without causing great harm to those who rely on them."

Although several human service programs are exempt from sequestration, APHSA noted that other critical programs are not, and should sequestration take effect, the cuts in programs not exempt will eventually become too extreme and intolerable.

"While APHSA appreciates the critical need to reduce the nation's debt by at least \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years as proposed by the Budget Control Act, this needs to be done with a thorough understanding of what programs are affected and the implications of those cuts," Wareing wrote.

Another option that APHSA recommends would be for Congress to amend the Budget Control Act to allow for more time, if that is what is necessary to come up with recommendations that can pass.

About APHSA

APHSA is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization representing appointed state health and human service agency commissioners—the nation's top government human service executives from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories—and their key state program managers, plus hundreds of county-level directors of human services throughout the nation—for the exchange of knowledge, data, best practices, policy review and development, networking and advocacy. APHSA is committed to carrying out our work through strong connections and partnerships among the many areas of government and the broader community that affect the well-being of our citizens. APHSA's mission is to pursue excellence in health and human services by supporting state and local agencies, informing policymakers, and working with our partners to drive innovative, integrated and efficient solutions in policy and practice.