POWER OF THE PURSE
Women Legislators for a Principled Budget
To all U.S. Senators and Representatives:

As women legislators, we represent millions of people in diverse communities across the country. We work frequently with our partners in Congress to create policies and programs that reflect our shared responsibility to strengthen America. As you work on upcoming appropriations decisions—we ask that you consider the profound impact it will have on our ability to serve our constituents and especially the impact this proposal would have on women.

As elected officials, we are using our collective voice to urge you to not accept drastic cuts to domestic programs without first considering cuts to our bloated Pentagon budget. Budgets are a statement of values, and this budget shows us the President values big corporations, defense contractors who profit from war, and making life easier for his rich friends. We, however, value investments in education, HHS, and HUD—programs Trump has cut over the last four years to continue wasteful forever wars. The strength of our nation is not measured by the countless military missions we fight overseas but in the fights elected officials wage to invest in our constituents.

The glaring emphasis on making cuts to non-defense discretionary spending does not align with pressing state priorities. Cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services impact all regions—from urban centers to rural areas. Chronic illnesses cost the United States approximately $5,300 per person per year, attributing to 90 percent of the country’s health expenditures. Rather than cutting health funds, the President's budget should be putting more money into safety-net hospitals, telemedicine efforts, and initiatives aimed at preventative care. Over 700 women die every year from pregnancy-related complications, two-thirds of which are preventable. If the President’s aim is to secure our nation, securing access to healthcare is an important step in that direction.

Since 2015, the share of federal spending on K-12 education has dropped by 12 percent. In particular, funding for school construction has stalled, while nearly half of school buildings nationwide are over 50 years old. Crumbling structures, busted ventilation systems, and old pipes affect how children learn. Providing more funding for school construction projects is a step towards closing the education gap.

The cost of state response to natural disasters and mitigation has increased for the third straight decade, putting a squeeze on state budgets when we are looking to provide affordable housing and fund public pensions. Pre-disaster efforts provide not only savings to states but also to the federal government. We call on Congress to provide that funding by redirecting money that would otherwise go to building new nuclear weapons (we hope to never use), retiring old planes (that are perfectly fine), and staying in endless wars (we were supposed to be done fighting).

The administration argues that the proposed budget will further strengthen and protect the nation. However, the Overseas Contingency Operations fund remains one of Washington’s obvious slush funds where resources are squirreled away under the guise of emergency funding for combat. While the Department of Defense seeks to hoard funds that the Pentagon cannot even account for, money for SNAP, CHIP, and other sorely needed domestic programs are on the chopping block. Families, especially those with a single breadwinner, will bear the brunt of those cuts.

Across the country, women sit down at the kitchen table every day to make tough choices as they craft their family’s budget and put their hard-earned money where it makes the most sense. This budget proposal does not honor the sacrifices these families make. Instead it draws us deeper and deeper into perpetual war under the guise of national security. The goal of national security cannot be fully met without ensuring that the 372 million people living in the U.S. are secure in their home and health.

Sincerely, The Undersigned State Legislators