

Senator Elizabeth Warren
Floor Speech on FY16 Republican Budget Conference Report
May 5, 2015

Mr./Madame President, a budget is about building for the future. A budget is about what it takes for our families, our businesses, and our economy to grow and prosper.

The basics are pretty simple. Our kids need access to a good, affordable education. Our workers need good wages and good benefits. Our businesses and our workers need transit, roads, and bridges that are safe enough, strong enough, and fast enough to get us to work and to keep goods and services moving. Our workers need good jobs here in America, jobs built on 21st century innovation and technology. And everyone needs to know that we're in this together, that we won't kick people to the ground, that we will help those who need it most, including seniors, children, and families struggling to make ends meet. That's how we build a strong future.

The Republicans have a different vision of how to build a future. The Republican budget plan will make the rich richer and the powerful more powerful, while leaving our kids, our college students, our seniors, our workers, and our families to fall further and further behind. The people of Massachusetts didn't send me here to do what I can to help the richest of the rich. They sent me here to work for them, so I want to talk about what this Republican budget will mean to the people of our state.

Assuming it is applied proportionately, the Republican budget could cut mandatory transportation funding by 40 percent over the next decade.ⁱ That is significantly fewer dollars to repair and improve our highways and to help keep our buses and trains moving in Massachusetts. So if you already think we already have a crumbling infrastructure, if you are already worried about old buses and whether the T can struggle through another winter, remember that the Republicans want to slash support for transportation by 40%.

With these cuts, our crumbling infrastructure will crumble even faster. And these cuts will also cost jobs. Economists estimate that this Republican budget could mean 56,000 fewer jobs in Massachusetts alone.ⁱⁱ

This budget also takes aim at our kids. Over the next decade, it could eliminate Head Start for 400,000 children across the country, cutting the program by more than \$4 billion.ⁱⁱⁱ

Little kids are under attack, and so are big kids. The Republican budget could also make college more expensive for 131,000 Massachusetts students who receive Pell grants.^{iv} And cuts in the student loan interest rates? Forget it. The Republican budget keeps sucking down billions of dollars in profits off student loans.

The Republican budget cuts put Massachusetts residents' health at risk – especially the health of our seniors.^v Today, the Affordable Care Act saves seniors billions of dollars on prescription drugs. The days when seniors had to choose between filling a prescription and paying the rent were over, but under the Republican budget, almost 80,000 seniors in Massachusetts could pay an average of \$920 more per year for prescription drugs.^{vi}

And it gets worse. About 900,000 seniors in Massachusetts could lose free preventative Medicare health services.^{vii} And about 26,000 Massachusetts nursing home residents who rely on Medicaid could face cuts to their care and an uncertain future.^{viii}

And what about medical research and the technologies for the future—the kinds of work we are proud to do in Massachusetts? For over 10 years, Congress has decimated medical research funding, reducing the buying power of the National Institutes of Health by nearly 25% and choking off support for projects that could lead to the next major breakthrough, breakthroughs against cancer, heart disease, ALS, diabetes, or autism.

And with people living longer and longer and more and more families desperate for a breakthrough on Alzheimer's, what's the Republican budget solution? Cut the NIH budget. Cut medical research. In fact, compared to the President's budget, the Republican budget could mean 1,400 fewer NIH grants a year.^{ix}

The Republican budget also cuts \$600 billion from “income security” – programs like nutrition assistance, potentially jeopardizing food stamps for thousands of Massachusetts families that depend on this program to put food on the table.^x And, just to turn the knife a little deeper for families in Massachusetts, the Republican budget could cut funding for heating assistance, funding that helped 183,000 Massachusetts families stay warm in the winter.^{xi}

We know who this budget would *hurt* – millions of middle-class families in Massachusetts and all over this country who are busting their tails to try to make ends meet. It would hurt people who work hard and play by the rules, but who are seeing opportunity slip away.

Why? Why inflict so much damage on hard-working American people—on students and seniors, on kids and construction workers? Why cut back on support for researchers trying to cure Alzheimer's or for college kids trying to get an education? Why? One answer: Once again, is that the Republicans want to give billions of dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans—and they expect everyone else to pay for it.

The Republicans have planned \$269 billion in tax cuts that could go to just a few thousand of the richest families.^{xii} That's not just irresponsible. It is just plain wrong.

A budget is about values. The Republicans' values are on display here. This budget is about making sure that a tilted playing field tilts even further, and everyone else gets left further and further behind.

Those aren't America's values. We believe – and we have always believed – in opportunity. We believe that everyone should have a fighting chance to build a better life for themselves and their children. That's the America I grew up in. That's the America we should fight for.

Mr./Madame President, we weren't sent here to help the rich get richer. It's time for the Senate to stand up for the values that build a strong middle class, and we can start by voting down this terrible Republican budget. Thank you.

ⁱ Budget Committee, "Sanders review of Republican Budget Conference Agreement Shows It Takes Us in the Wrong Direction," 5/4/15 at <http://www.budget.senate.gov/democratic/public/index.cfm/press-releases-news?ID=63af069f-0a5d-428a-b94f-94620790f8d0>

ⁱⁱ DPCC, Republic Budget Would Harm Massachusetts' Economy, at <http://www.dpcc.senate.gov/files/documents/2015BudgetEconomy/MassachusettsEconomy2015.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Budget Committee, "Sanders review of Republican Budget Conference Agreement Shows It Takes Us in the Wrong Direction," 5/4/15 at <http://www.budget.senate.gov/democratic/public/index.cfm/press-releases-news?ID=63af069f-0a5d-428a-b94f-94620790f8d0>;

^{iv} DPCC, "FACT SHEET: Republican Budget Rigs Rules Against Hard-Working Americans to Benefit Special Interests" May 4, 2015 at <http://dpcvotes.senate.gov/resources/docs-released/fs-114-1-89.pdf>

^v OMB, "Congressional Republican Budget Conference Agreement Cuts Programs that Support the Middle Class, Working Families, and National Security," 4/30/15 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/04/30/congressional-republican-budget-conference-agreement-cuts-programs-support-middle-cl>

^{vi} White House, "Congressional Republican Budget Conference Agreement Cuts Programs that Support the Middle Class, Working Families, and National Security," 3/24/15 at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/state_by_state_gop_budget_impacts.pdf

^{vii} DPCC, "Republican Plan Puts Special Interests Ahead of Massachusetts Seniors Health Care," March 23, 2015 at <http://www.dpcc.senate.gov/?p=issue&id=390>

^{viii} DPCC, "FACT SHEET: Republican Budget Rigs Rules Against Hard-Working Americans to Benefit Special Interests" May 4, 2015 at <http://dpcvotes.senate.gov/resources/docs-released/fs-114-1-89.pdf>

^{ix} White House, 4/30/15 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/04/30/congressional-republican-budget-conference-agreement-cuts-programs-support-middle-cl>

^x OMB, "Congressional Republican Budget Conference Agreement Cuts Programs that Support the Middle Class, Working Families, and National Security," 4/30/15 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/04/30/congressional-republican-budget-conference-agreement-cuts-programs-support-middle-cl>; and state by state numbers from White House, 3/24/15 at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/state_by_state_gop_budget_impacts.pdf

^{xi} Budget Committee, "Sanders review of Republican Budget Conference Agreement Shows It Takes Us in the Wrong Direction," 5/4/15 at <http://www.budget.senate.gov/democratic/public/index.cfm/press-releases-news?ID=63af069f-0a5d-428a-b94f-94620790f8d0>; HHS, LIHEAP Clearinghouse – Massachusetts, FY1415 at <http://www.liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/profiles/Mass.htm>

^{xii} PolitiFact, 5/3/15 at <http://www.politifact.com/virginia/statements/2015/may/03/robert-hurt/hurt-amiss-linking-estate-tax-small-farm-businesse/>