Dear Mr. Speaker:

We write to urge you to move with urgency to eliminate the threat of a government shutdown as we approach the end of the fiscal year. With mere weeks before American taxpayers lose access to vital benefits and services, the time has come to end partisan posturing and put forward a viable path to funding our government. To that end, we stand ready to support a bipartisan funding vehicle free of poison-pill policy riders that is consistent with the agreement you struck with President Biden and which was ratified by bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate. Let us be clear: if you choose not to pass a bipartisan government funding bill consistent with the Fiscal Responsibility Act, you are deliberately choosing to shut down the government.

Although our views differed on whether these compromises should have been made at all simply to raise the debt ceiling, the funding levels agreed to in the bipartisan debt ceiling agreement were the result of significant compromises by Democrats just to maintain the full faith and credit of the United States. These compromises included frozen funding levels for essential domestic programs that fail to keep up with inflation; rescissions of vital IRS funds dedicated to cracking down on tax evasion by wealthy individuals and large corporations; cuts to funding to address COVID-19; the authorization of new fossil fuel infrastructure; and new and onerous red tape that deprives older Americans from accessing modest Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

Regardless of such disagreements, the framework passed both chambers of Congress, was signed by the President, and was enacted into law. A deal is a deal, Mr. Speaker, and we urge you to uphold your side of the agreement rather than continuing to expose yourself as an unreliable negotiator and governing partner.

At this late date, the only path forward is to deliver on the deal you struck in June, which was supported by two-thirds of your conference. We can look to the Senate for an example, where Senators achieved bipartisan consensus on funding and policy for all 12 of its appropriations bills. In contrast, your House majority has been unable to pass the vast majority of its own hyper-partisan appropriations bills, despite the inclusion of extreme policy riders and draconian spending cuts designed to accommodate the far-right faction of your conference. This approach, appropriating well below the Fiscal Responsibility Act levels while attaching far-right policies to these bills, violates the bipartisan framework already enacted into law.

Republican-written House appropriations bills would impose an $800 million cut to food benefits for low-income mothers and children, kick 224,000 teachers from classrooms, and eliminate access to early childhood education for 51,000 children in Head Start, all while limiting access to abortion. The
Republican-written House appropriations bills would impose an $800 million cut to food benefits for low-income mothers and children, kick 224,000 teachers from classrooms, and eliminate access to early childhood education for 51,000 children in Head Start, all while limiting access to abortion. The American people cannot afford further cuts to the programs they rely on for health, nutrition, education, transportation, housing, safety, and much more. It is time to follow the lead of the Senate and pass a bipartisan funding vehicle.

Some in your conference have been openly publicly threatening a government shutdown, telling Americans that “we should not fear a government shutdown.” The American people know better. A government shutdown will impact the very things families desperately need: the risk of running out of SNAP and TANF benefits, limited access to beneficiary assistance for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, curtailed food and environmental safety inspections, weakened disease surveillance, treatment and prevention efforts, and the potential of no back pay for low-wage federal contract workers. Seventy-seven percent of voters also believe we should avoid a shutdown because it harms the economy. If this House majority decides to shut down the government by insisting on unpopular cuts to investments that help our country flourish and extreme policy riders that target the most vulnerable Americans, they will hold you accountable.

Government shutdowns never end well for the party responsible for the shutdown, and Republicans will be held responsible if you pursue any path other than a spending agreement based on the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. We stand ready to work with you to follow the lead of the Senate, pass a bipartisan funding vehicle consistent with the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and avoid a government shutdown.

Sincerely,

Pramila Jayapal
Chair
Congressional Progressive Caucus

Ilhan Omar
Deputy Chair
Congressional Progressive Caucus

Greg Casar
Whip
Congressional Progressive Caucus

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

Jill Tokuda
Member of Congress

Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Becca Balint
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress
Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

Troy Carter
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Summer Lee
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress
Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

CC: House Majority Leader Scalise, Democratic Leader Jeffries, Democratic Whip Clark, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell