



**National
Nurses
United**

The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

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November 9, 2011

Senator Sherrod Brown
713 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

National Nurses United, the nation's largest professional organization and union of registered nurses fully supports your legislation to formalize the consumer price index for elderly consumers (CPI-E). We have been disappointed in the fact that our nation's seniors and people with disabilities haven't seen an increase in their Social Security benefits in the past year despite skyrocketing health care costs and high fuel costs, which affect seniors disproportionately.

As you may know, nurses in the United States lift on average 1.8 tons per day. This makes them especially susceptible to injury, particularly as they get older. That is part of the reason we oppose any efforts to use an inferior CPI measurement to determine annual cost of living adjustments (COLA). People who become disabled before they reach retirement age must live longer on only COLA increases, whereas those who work until normal retirement age are able to take advantage of Social Security's wage indexing formula. Add to that the fact that nursing is a female-dominated occupation and women tend to live longer, and you have a real problem when low COLAs compound year after year to erode the value of Social Security.

But nurses don't just speak for nurses. We are patient advocates, first and foremost. We speak for all Americans who don't have a voice. Using this current economic crisis to cut the Social Security benefit that seniors and people with disabilities increasingly rely on to make ends meet is unconscionable. Using this moment to introduce legislation supporting a more accurate CPI is exactly the direction in which we should be moving. Social Security was established in the midst of the Great Depression to help alleviate suffering and stimulate the economy. Movement in the opposite direction is not only imprudent, it is immoral.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Lighty".

Michael Lighty
Director of Public Policy