HR 2035

September 26, 1961

The Honorable Abraham Ribicoff
Secretary of Health, Education,
and Welfare
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

When I became chairman of the Labor - H. E. W. Subcommittee in 1949 the appropriation for Federal grants to States for public assistance was $948,000,000. At that time most people expected that the cost of this welfare program would gradually go down as the Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance Program expanded.

The OASI and disability insurance programs have expanded even more than was anticipated. In the entire calendar year 1949 payments totaled $667 million. Currently these programs are paying beneficiaries at the rate of over one billion dollars per month. With an increase since 1949 of almost twenty times in the amount being paid recipients under the Social Security insurance programs it is difficult for many to see why the public welfare grant program should have increased from $948,000,000 in 1949 to approximately $2 1/2 billion projected for 1962.

I realize that there are factors such as the increase in the population, increase in the cost of living and other more subtle factors that almost unavoidably add to the cost of welfare programs. On the other hand, I know and I am sure you know that there are a great many people in this country that are far from satisfied with this type of explanation. Frankly,

I am far from satisfied with the explanations we have been receiving year after year when we have inquired into these ever increasing public welfare costs during our hearings on the annual budget.

In my opinion the Federal Government has been most negligent with regard to the necessity of making a real study in depth rather than the superficial treatment this problem has received in recent years. We have almost disregarded the recent signs of public uprising. Sometimes I think our attitude approaches defeatism.

All decent people want to assure adequate care for the aged, the fatherless, the handicapped and disabled, and other unfortunates who cannot provide for themselves. I would want nothing that would interfere with this being done. However, I am convinced that our very inaction in finding those things that may need correction and the best way of correcting them will inevitably lead to harsh measures put into effect through desperation that will deny care to many who are most worthy of it. I believe you will agree with me that we have seen examples of this in the recent past.

We have had no adequate study in many years into such matters as the best distribution of financial responsibility between Federal, State and local governments; eligibility standards for welfare recipients; residence and property -- income limitations; prosecution of deserters; the proper payment per case; confidentiality of welfare records; efficiency of various administrative proceedures; and other factors affecting the adequacy and economical operation of welfare programs. The executive and administrative responsibility for this program is yours. I realize this is but one of many important and pressing responsibilities that you have. However, I think that this is one of the most important, and I urge you with all the vigor and sincerity at my command to promptly initiate a thorough, searching study into all of these matters.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

John E. Fogarty
Member of Congress