

February 26, 2013

Jeffrey Zients

Deputy Director for Management

White House Office of Management and Budget Executive Office Building

725 17th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Zients,

The administration is warning sequestration may force the laying off or furloughing of air traffic controllers, border patrol officers, food inspectors, Transportation Security Administration screeners, or civilians supporting our men and women in combat in Afghanistan. I would suggest the better approach is to consolidate duplicative positions with overlapping responsibilities and nearly identical jobs.

In the just the past two years, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified more than 1,362 duplicative programs accounting for at least \$364.5 billion in federal spending every single year. A new GAO duplication report is expected within weeks, which will expose even more areas of overlap and duplication.

GAO found the government administers 80 economic development programs at four different agencies, spends \$170 billion year on more than 160 housing assistance programs, and allocates more than \$3 billion for at least 250 similar grant programs at the Department of Justice. Attached is a chart detailing 28 specific examples of duplication outlined by GAO.

In some cases, this unnecessary duplication results in taxpayers paying two, three, four, or more times for the same exact function. For example, more than \$40 million may have been paid by various agencies for the *same exact research*, according to a new study published in the journal *Nature*. GAO's review also found different programs providing grants to the same recipients for similar purposes. It makes no sense to cut spending on truly vital services, like food inspection, while paying twice the cost necessary to provide another service.

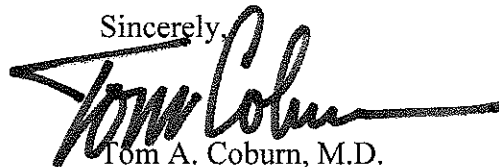
GAO found this fragmentation creates difficulties for those seeking to access services and administrative burdens for service providers who must navigate various application requirements, selection criteria, and reporting requirements. GAO explained specifically, "Fragmentation and program overlap can create an environment in which programs may not serve children and families as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The existence of multiple programs can also create added administrative costs, such as costs associated with determining eligibility and meeting varied reporting requirements.” Consolidation would require fewer bureaucrats and less paperwork, and thereby reduce the cost of providing services and improve access for those seeking assistance.

Duplication means paying more for less. Sequestration requires doing more with less. Eliminating unnecessary duplication, therefore, provides a commonsense approach that can result in billions of dollars being saved across the government without sacrificing, and in some cases improving, services.

Instead of arbitrarily furloughing personnel who may perform essential duties, OMB should first direct agencies to consolidate overlapping and duplicative programs and eliminate those positions that perform nearly identical duties. During a time of budget cuts, it is irresponsible to pay two or more people to do the same job, while laying off other employees in essential positions performing critical duties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom Coburn". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "T" and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.

Ranking Member

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

DUPLICATION NATION

Duplication Program Area	Number of Programs	Number of Agencies	Total Annual Spending
Financial Literacy	15	13	\$30 million
Green Buildings	94	11	*\$1 billion
Housing Assistance	160	20	\$170 billion
Department of Justice Grant Programs	253	10	\$3.9 billion
Diesel Emissions	14	3	\$1.4 billion over 5 years
Early Learning and Child Care	50	9	\$16 billion
Employment Assistance for Disabled Individuals	50	9	\$3.5 billion
Support of Entrepreneurs	53	4	\$2.6 billion
STEM Education Programs	209	13	\$3.1 billion
Unmanned Aircraft Programs	15	5	\$37 billion over 5 years
Domestic Food Assistance	18	3	\$62.5 billion
Homeless Programs	21	7	\$2.9 billion
Transportation Services for Transportation-Disadvantaged Persons	80	8	*\$2 billion
Job Training and Employment	47	9	\$18 billion
Teacher Quality	82	10	\$4 billion
Food Safety	30	15	\$1.6 billion
Military and Veterans Health Service		4	\$49 billion
Economic Development	80	4	\$6.5 billion
US-Mexico Border Region Water Needs		7	\$1.4 billion over 8 years
Reducing Reliance on Petroleum Fuel for Federal Fleet	5	20	*\$50 million
Electronic Health Records Systems for Veterans & Military	10	2	\$2.6 billion over 13 years
Justice Department Explosives Investigations	4	2	\$35 million
Sharing Security Information	3	2	\$450 million
Defense Language and Cultural Training	18	1	*\$30 million
Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Efforts	6	1	\$6.5 billion
Training to Identify Fraudulent Travel Documents	7	3	*\$20 million
FEMA Preparedness Grants	17	1	\$2.7 billion
Nuclear Nonproliferation	21	5	*\$90 million
Totals	1362	NA	\$364.5 billion annually

*staff estimate