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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **SOCIAL SECURITY CUTS WOULD PUT 6.5 MILLION CHILDREN IN JEOPARDY**

#### **Children and Families Face Dire Consequences If Congress Cuts Program**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) March 3, 2011 – Proposals to drastically cut Social Security would harm more than 6.5 million children in the United States who receive support from the program, according to experts speaking on Capitol Hill today. Sponsored by Generations United, the briefing featured the release of a new profile publication highlighting success stories from a number of Americans who received assistance from Social Security, including Franni Franken, wife of Minnesota Senator Al Franken, and Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan.

“A diverse group of people benefit from Social Security, and it’s important to remember children and grandfamilies are part of that,” said Generations United Executive Director Donna Butts. “From average citizens to members of Congress, Social Security has been there to help keep families together in times of tragedy. It should never be referred to simply as a retirement program.”

All generations benefit from the safety net Social Security provides. Drastic cuts would threaten the well-being of millions of Americans.

“Social Security plays a critical role in the economic security of our nation’s old and young—including foster children,” said Christine James-Brown, President and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America. “It provides indispensable protection for a majority of the nation’s 73 million children. As Congress looks to cut the federal budget, we urge them to be mindful of the range of benefits that Social Security offers and preserve vital programs that strengthen our children—our nation — and our future.”

The panel rejected the notion that Social Security must be cut in order to ensure its future funding.

“Some policymakers claim that cuts to Social Security are necessary and for the benefit of our country’s children and grandchildren,” said William L. Minnix, President and CEO of LeadingAge and Generations United Board Chair. “The fact is the best way to support all generations is to strengthen Social Security, not cut it.”

Despite the success of Social Security, there are those who argue for cuts to the program in order to pay down the federal deficit. This is however, a false premise.

“Social Security did not contribute to the deficit, nor is it in crisis,” said Virginia Reno, Vice President for Income Security, National Academy of Social Insurance. “One way we can improve adequacy for children and families is to reinstate the student benefit until age 22 for children enrolled in post-secondary school.”

Social Security benefits children and their families through survivor benefits, retirement benefits, and disability benefits. Survivor benefits substantially relieve financial stresses for surviving children of a deceased parent. Retirement benefits provide monthly support to dependent children of retired parents and grandparents. Social Security disability benefits further protect more than 1.7 million children who are the dependents of disabled workers. It is more than a retirement program – it provides essential protections for people of all ages.

The briefing also featured Baltimore grandmother Morrisella Middleton, who has been raising her grandchildren since 1982. She shared her personal story of how crucial Social Security has been in keeping her family together.

“Social Security has been my lifeline – my only lifeline,” Middleton said. “It’s been critical for me in raising the children and to their future. Thank goodness for the survivor benefits for the kids and what I contributed to Social Security in the 44 years I have worked. It’s been my only token to get by.”

Nineteen groups representing child and older adult advocacy organizations joined Generations United to co-sponsor the event, including AARP, Alliance for Retired Americans, American Humane Association, Child Welfare League of America, Children’s Defense Fund, Easter Seals, Grandfamilies of America, Latinos for a Secure Retirement, LeadingAge, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, National Council on Aging, National Human Services Assembly, North American Council on Adoptable Children, OWL –The Voice of Midlife and Older Women, Voices for America’s Children, Wider Opportunities for Women, and ZERO TO THREE.

*Formed in 1986, Generations United is the national, non-partisan membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Representing more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans, Generations United serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. For more information, visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).*