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Congressman Charles Bass, R-NH, made his pitch for cutting federal spending overall while increasing support in targeted areas.

In testimony to the House Budget Committee last week, Bass noted that the failure to pass a budget has a finished federal prison in one of his cities (Berlin) waiting to open.

"This state-of-the-art, \$276 million federal prison is estimated to create more than 300 new jobs and have a \$40 million annual impact on my Congressional district, but right now it sits empty," Bass said.

"What's worse, each year that this facility sits vacant, the Bureau of Prisons will spend \$4 million just to maintain it."

Bass also said he favors more support for special education, adding that 20 percent support is only half what Congress promised in setting up the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act four decades ago.

Among other "worthwhile programs" that need funding, Bass continued, are for home heating aid, community health center support and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

"As we work through the budget process, we will have a lot of tough choices to make to sufficiently fund these programs while at the same time learning to live within our means," Bass said.

"The first place we can start is by eliminating wasteful programs, but this cannot be our only action," he said.

The only way to balance the federal budget over the long term, Bass concluded, is to cut mandatory or entitlement spending for Social Security, Medicare.

"If we don't deal with this issue now, we will doom our children and grandchildren to a future of unsustainable debt that threatens our nation's economic competitiveness."