



“Let Justice Flow: A Call to Restore and Reconcile”

A Catholic Message to Congress



Hundreds of Catholic leaders from throughout our country are in the nation’s capital for the 2019 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering. Our faith calls us all to work for justice, promote healing and restoration, defend human life and dignity, and work for the common good of civil society.

Make Poor and Vulnerable People and Care for Creation a Funding Priority

Every day, in every corner of the world, the Catholic Church--Catholic Charities, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, and thousands of schools, hospitals, parishes, and NGOs--works to draw a “Circle of Protection” around the “least of these.” The federal government is a vital partner in that work. Congress should fund programs and resist budget cuts by prioritizing programs that help people living in poverty, both at home and abroad and support policies that promote stewardship of creation.

International

1. Preserve funding for Fiscal Year 2020 to at least Fiscal Year 2019 proposed levels for **poverty-reducing development and humanitarian programs** that save lives, address the root causes of conflicts, reduce crushing poverty, and support the record number of 68 million forcibly displaced persons around the world, including 25 million refugees. (See chart for programs supported by USCCB and CRS.)
2. Maintain strong and vibrant **investments in diplomacy** to help developing countries build peaceful and prosperous societies; do not cut non-defense spending to increase military funding.
3. Reintroduce and pass the **Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act** (HR 5273 as passed by the House in the 115th Congress) to increase and improve the United States’ ability to deploy diplomatic and good governance resources to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict and avoid the need for military force.

Domestic

1. **Preserve funding for nutrition programs that alleviate hunger.** Essential funding should be maintained for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Assistance Program (CSFP), and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, among others. In 2017, 11.8% of households in the U.S. were food-insecure.
2. **Invest in affordable housing.** More than 38 million households are cost-burdened by spending more than they can afford on increasingly higher housing costs. The number of people experiencing homelessness has increased for the first time in six years. At the same time, the number of available low-cost rental units has shrunk. Amid this crisis, housing and community development programs continue to be underfunded, putting poor and vulnerable households at risk of losing stable housing.
3. **Support environmental stewardship.** Funding for the EPA and Department of the Interior appropriations should be maintained or increased based on FY 2018 levels. Support should be given to H.R. 763, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019, bipartisan carbon emissions legislation that addresses climate change while safeguarding the economic well-being of communities and families.

Setting Spending Priorities: The Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 established budget caps on the amount of discretionary funding that Congress could annually appropriate through fiscal year 2021. For upcoming fiscal year 2020, budget caps are scheduled to kick in that would compel Congress to cut about \$36 billion in non-defense discretionary spending. This could have a devastating impact on international assistance and programs that help poor and vulnerable persons and that promote stewardship of creation. Congress should work for a bipartisan solution that will avoid severe and unnecessary cuts to domestic and international programs that assist the poor and vulnerable.

Protect Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status Holders, and Provide a Path to Permanency & Citizenship

As Catholics, we believe that the dignity of every human being, particularly that of youth and families, must be protected. The Catholic Bishops have long supported Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and they continue to do so. As Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chairman of the Committee on Migration, recently [stated](#): “As a nation, we have a moral and humanitarian obligation to Dreamers. These young people have steadfastly worked to improve themselves and our country and attempted in good faith to comply with the law as it stood.” Bishop Vásquez has similarly [noted](#): “We believe our nation has a moral responsibility to provide continued temporary protection until TPS holders’ return and reintegration can be safely accomplished. TPS recipients are an integral part of the fabric of our communities.” We urge Congress to find a bipartisan legislative solution to protect Dreamers and TPS holders.

- 1. Find a Bipartisan Solution to Protect Dreamers that Offers a Path to Citizenship.** The approximately 1.8 million Dreamers living in our country were brought to the U.S. as young people. They worship with us in our churches and synagogues, serve in our military, contribute to our economy, and add their talents to society. Dreamers know America as their only home and should not be denied the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship and participate fully in civic life.
- 2. Find a Permanent Legal Solution for TPS Holders.** Congressional lawmakers need to work in a bipartisan manner to address long-term TPS recipients. These individuals have personal equities that are closely associated with U.S. interests, such as U.S. citizen children, businesses, careers, and home mortgages.
- 3. Maintain Protections for Unaccompanied Children and Asylum Seekers.** A solution for Dreamers and TPS holders cannot be at the expense of other immigrant children and families. Such a tradeoff would be heartless and untenable. We ask that you reject any legislation that threatens existing protections for unaccompanied children and asylum seekers, as these protections help prevent trafficking and abuse and ensure their access to adequate care and due process.

Additional Resources from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Links to Background Materials:

CatholicSocialMinistryGathering.org

Federal Budget Antipoverty Priorities:

Office of Domestic Social Development: usccb.org/about/domestic-social-development

Office of International Justice and Peace: usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Dreamers, and Temporary Protected Status ACA:

Department of Migration and Refugee Services, Justice for Immigrants Campaign:

justiceforimmigrants.org