



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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July 19, 2010

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I urge you to provide crucial support to millions of low income Americans. The USCCB believes that two very important issues face Congress: continued assistance to unemployed American workers and dedicated revenues for the Housing Trust Fund.

- The renewed benefits Congress provided for unemployed workers earlier this year as the unemployment rate rose to historic levels have expired. These important benefits, in the form of extended unemployment insurance benefits and other supports, helped millions of people keep their homes, maintain their health insurance, and feed their families. Without quick Congressional action to extend these unemployment benefits and additional support through 2010, millions of workers will be left without the financial wherewithal to provide for their families. Not only would this be a horrible blow to the fragile economic recovery, it would be a tragedy for these families and the communities in which they live.
- The National Housing Trust Fund was established to provide communities with resources to build, preserve, and rehabilitate rental homes that are affordable for extremely low-income households. The Housing Trust needs funds to provide for the construction or rehabilitation of rental housing benefiting these households. The Catholic Bishops recognize that far too many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or families must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine. The Housing Trust fund would help preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing for low income families. We urge that dedicated revenues be made available.

As pastors, we know the human cost of joblessness and the social consequences of inadequate benefits. Our Church teaches that society and the state must protect workers "either through economic policies aimed at ensuring balanced growth and full employment or through unemployment insurance..." [CA14] Obviously new jobs are the best answer for those without work, but, in the meantime, we truly owe these workers some measure of compassion and justice gained in part by simply extending the federal benefits in the unemployment insurance system.

We believe that coming to the aid of low income families is not only good for the economy; it is the right thing to do. Please act now to avoid the tragic consequences of millions of people with literally no means of support or a place to live. I urge you to extend the package of unemployment benefits and programs for unemployed workers through the end of 2010 and to fund the National Housing Trust Fund.

Sincerely,

Most Rev. William F. Murphy
Bishop of Rockville Centre
Chairman

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