



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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April 9, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Foxx,

We write to commend you on the swift and bipartisan action you have already taken to respond to the health and economic crisis our nation is facing as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. We express our appreciation for the helpful provisions that were included in the legislative packages enacted so far and offer suggestions on further legislative steps we believe are urgently needed.

As the Catholic Church at the service of all God's people, we stand ready to work with you to advance the common good during this global and national health emergency, including by promoting the dignity and value of all human life, and by protecting poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk. Accordingly, as you move forward with your important work, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to use the money and policies in these bills to fund and promote life-affirming policies and not to advance the destruction of innocent human life.

As you contemplate a fourth legislative relief bill, we urge you to please consider the following requests which particularly fall within or are related to the jurisdiction of your committees. We ask that a fourth relief bill:

- **Provide direct aid to families in need of immediate assistance for educating their children at home, including through microgrants and access to education savings accounts.** We strongly support flexible direct aid to all families for K-12 education expenses, including microgrants to assist families in need with tools and technology to support distance learning. We also support access and funding for education savings accounts, for families to use on their education expenses. With continued uncertainty ahead, direct aid will offer parents the resources they need to ensure continuity and make up for learning losses into the summer and even the fall.
- **Ensure any additional education funding is shared equitably with non-public schools.** We are very grateful for the non-public school language and access that was

provided in the *CARES Act* Education Stabilization Fund. We ask that language in any additional stimulus proposals ensure that education-directed funds are shared equitably with the non-public school community, similar to the function of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* and *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. The intent of Congress should be to reach all children's educational needs, and this means including non-public schools. All children and all schools have been affected by this pandemic.

- **Additional healthcare resources.** This is especially necessary with record claims of unemployment, which necessarily coincide with record numbers of people losing their employer-provided health insurance. To this end, Medicaid resources for states should be expanded. Increased federal investment in Medicaid can help states respond to public health needs and avoid cuts to healthcare or other vital services while serving as a proven tool to stimulate the economy. In addition, we ask that you consider how best to reach individuals who have recently lost their jobs, who do not qualify for Medicaid, and whose present situation makes getting private insurance for their families unaffordable.

Despite the very good additional resources for healthcare providers in the *CARES Act*, some healthcare providers have run large losses ramping up capacity and will have to start furloughing some workers if additional help is not provided. We also encourage you to consider additional resources for training more palliative care workers and providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for front-line health care workers.

As you know, there is a growing body of evidence of racial disparities in coronavirus-related infections and deaths which is deeply concerning. We hope you will think through how best to address this problem. For example, methods of care for low-income and historically marginalized communities, such as community health centers, should be given special consideration for additional resources.

- **Provide free COVID-19 testing and treatment for all individuals living in the United States, including the undocumented, and ensure that those who utilize such services will not later be held deportable or excludable as a public charge.** We urge that the next legislative package ensure that testing and treatment for COVID-19 and related conditions are considered treatment for an emergency condition under 42 U.S.C. 1396b(v). Failure to address this problem would undermine efforts to contain the virus, potentially harming tens of millions of people, and it would put further strain on providers and states who will be burdened with uncompensated care costs. It is vital to ensure all have access to life-saving testing and care.
- **Enact policies that encourage and support employers to retain current workers and rehire those who have been laid off.** Additional provisions should be considered for workers—especially low- and middle-income—who are not reached by the provisions of the *CARES Act*. Employers must be encouraged and supported to retain current workers and rehire those who have been laid off in order to provide a vehicle for wage and health benefits even if the workplace is shut down due to the crisis. The expansion of unemployment compensation in previous stimulus bills has helped, but as the crisis persists, families will not be able to pay bills due to lost wages and will be particularly

vulnerable to losing health insurance. It will be easier for our economy to bounce back after the crisis lifts if all employers can survive with their payroll intact.

We respectfully ask that you consider our suggestions as you craft the next phase of your legislative response. Once again, we are deeply appreciative of the steps Congress has taken so far to alleviate the health and economic crises caused by the Coronavirus. We offer our prayers to you, the nation, and the world as we seek to come together to respond to this scourge.

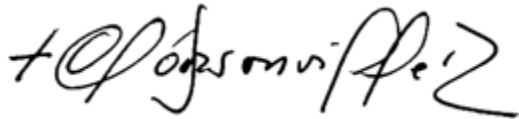
Sincerely,



Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ
Bishop of Oakland
Chairman, Committee on Catholic
Education



Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington
Chairman, Committee on Migration