



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3000

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

July 30, 2020

Dear Senator:

As Congress continues negotiations on additional COVID-19 relief legislation, we write to renew our call for relief that focuses on those people who are most in need and advances the common good of all who have been affected by this deadly virus. We unite ourselves to the prayers of Pope Francis for hope during this time of hardship, as he reminds us that, “This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic.”

We are grateful for the significant relief that has been provided so far and respectfully request your consideration of the following for additional relief and support:

For those struggling to meet their most basic needs, we ask Congress to provide additional stimulus payments; increase the maximum SNAP benefit amount by 15%, increase the minimum SNAP benefit amount, and suspend any rules that make it harder for needy individuals to access nutrition aid until the economy recovers; provide robust resources to care for those experiencing homelessness and prevent people from losing their homes, including through Emergency Solutions Grants, emergency rental assistance, mortgage assistance, housing counseling services, and greater eviction and foreclosure preventions. It is also good to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit for those who need it most.

For low-income families in non-public schools, we are grateful for inclusion of the School Choice Now Act (S. 4284), which provides one-time, emergency funding for scholarship granting organizations (SGOs), and we ask Congress to appropriate funds based on the number of children enrolled in non-public schools (10 % nationwide). Further, any additional K12 education funding provided by Congress must provide access to equitable services for non-public schools.

For the health care needs of everyone, especially the sick, we support access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare that fully affirms all human life, including the poor and marginalized. Any effort to fund insurance coverage must not provide federal funding for health plans that cover abortion. Medicaid resources should be expanded for states and tribes in order to respond to public health needs and avoid cuts to vital services. We also encourage additional support for Community Health Centers, training for more palliative care workers, and research regarding the link between air pollution and coronavirus health outcomes.

For communities of color, we ask that the relief provided by Congress consider the needs of the historically marginalized, with consideration of how any new policies may address the systemic racism and oppression that manifest in disparate health and economic outcomes.

For our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters, we request inclusion of the American Citizen Coronavirus Relief Act (S. 4071) to ensure certain immigrant families are eligible to receive the stimulus funding and support they need to ensure family stability during this time; inclusion of the Protecting Benefits for Elderly Refugees and Refugees with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act (S. 4307) to extend the period of eligibility for SSI for certain refugees in the U.S.; automatic extensions of work authorizations and visas for DACA, TPS holders, and essential workers; testing and treatment for all persons; and \$642 million for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement to respond to urgent needs of refugees and others during this time. Additionally, while we welcome additional funding for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, we are concerned about the proposed 10% uniform surcharge increase to pay for the funding and its impacts on low-income

immigrants. We urge Congress to adjust premium processing fees with carve outs for nonprofit organizations and small businesses instead of the 10% surcharge.

For those suffering the effects of this pandemic around the world, we support at least \$20 billion in a supplemental package in order to meet immediate health needs as well as mitigate second order humanitarian, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic.

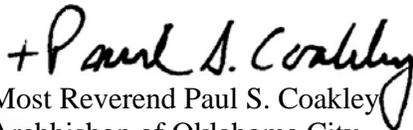
For those in prisons and jails, we request expedited review for possible release under an expanded clemency framework, such as in the provisions of the COVID-19 Safer Detention Act (S. 4034), and ask that certain fees related to the criminal justice system, such as fees for phone and video calls, be waived. Additional resources are needed for healthcare for persons in prisons, jails, or detention facilities, and for states to implement these policies.

For workers, there must be more resources to keep people employed, hire back those who have lost their jobs, and assist the unemployed, and to provide sufficient resources, particularly personal protective equipment (PPE), for all essential workers to safeguard their health and wellbeing as they work for the benefit of society. As unemployment remains at historically high levels, unemployment compensation should remain robust while job opportunities in some sectors suffer longer term reductions.

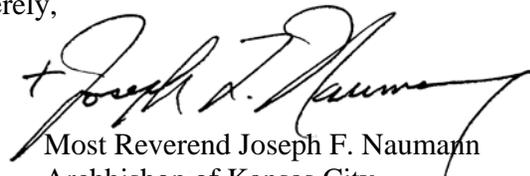
For those serving in the charitable sector, we request that Congress amend Sec. 2103 of the CARES Act to provide 100% unemployment reimbursement to nonprofits covered by this section; expand eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program to non-profits employing between 500 and 10,000 employees; and incentivize charitable giving by expanding the above-the-line charitable giving tax deduction beyond what was provided in the CARES Act. To this end, we ask Congress to include the bipartisan provisions in the Universal Giving Charitable Response Act (S. 4032).

Please know of our prayers for you, your staff, and our entire country as you weigh these decisions that impact so many.

Sincerely,



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



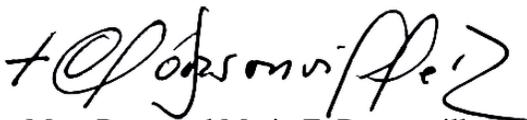
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Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville
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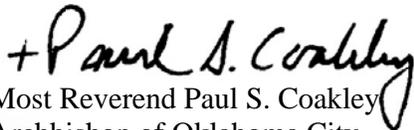
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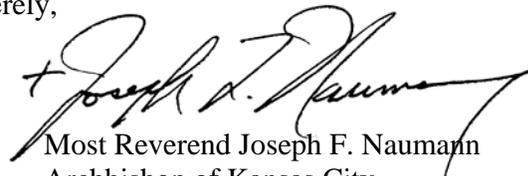
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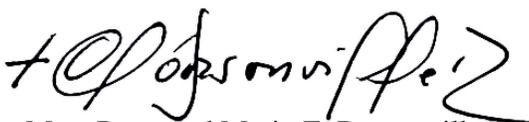
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