



# United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

September 7, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative:

On April 22, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) outlined a moral framework in furtherance of crafting just infrastructure policies.<sup>i</sup> As Congress begins consideration of a budget reconciliation bill, we once again ask you to work toward policies that will help those on the margins of society, strengthen families, protect religious freedom, promote care for creation, and respect the rights and dignity of every human life. We ask for your consideration of the following:

## **Integrate Migrants and Refugees**

With respect to migration, at a minimum, we urge Congress to include legalization and a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, those covered by Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), undocumented agricultural workers, and other undocumented essential workers in the upcoming budget reconciliation bill. This stems, in part, from our deep concern for family unity and the obstacles facing many mixed-status families. Congress should also take steps to provide for the pastoral care and support of communities across the religious spectrum by permanently extending the special immigrant non-minister provision of the nation's religious worker visa program, which allows religious organizations to employ essential workers from abroad and sunsets at the end of Fiscal Year 2021.

## **Jobs for the Poor and Vulnerable**

We have long held that work is fundamental to human dignity. The bishops consistently call for the creation of decent work at decent wages as the most effective way to build a just economy. Job creation should focus on just wages, include a right to organize, and resources for job training and apprenticeship programs. It would also be good to avoid rewarding companies that engage in anti-competitive behavior and to favor various forms of employee ownership and profit sharing. An expanded Earned Income Tax Credit would do much to help achieve just wages across the economy.

## **Strengthen Families**

We have long taught that "[e]conomic and social policies as well as the organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life. The long-range future of this nation is intimately linked with the well-being of families, for the family is the most basic form of human community."<sup>ii</sup> To this end, we urge you to make the expanded Child Tax Credit permanent. It is especially important that the credit remain fully refundable to ensure the most economically vulnerable children benefit from this family support.

Other policies that will support families include expanding access to in-home care for family members, strengthening child nutrition programs, ensuring quality and affordable childcare options, paid sick leave, parental leave, and other forms of support for working families.<sup>iii</sup> Such policies and related investments should support parents in decisions to care for their own children, rectify marriage penalties (such as in Supplemental Security Income benefits), and

ultimately empower families rather than supplant them.

### **Expanding Access to Early Childhood Education**

Young children deserve a warm, loving, and nurturing environment in their developing years. The Church teaches this environment and care should be provided by parents, who must also have true liberty in their choice of schools. Any federal program addressing the issue of preschool expansion must take into consideration the desires of parents, the unique needs of their children, and include a variety of educational opportunities, including programs provided by the faith-based community. The faith-based sector has led in quality childcare and early childhood programming for decades and it is vital that the faith-based community is included in any early childhood or expanded pre-k program.

### **Ensure Safe, Decent, and Affordable Housing**

Access to safe, decent, and affordable housing is a fundamental human right which must be made available to all people.<sup>iv</sup> We urge you to work towards this goal by increasing federal support for affordable housing production including through increased funding for the national Housing Trust Fund and the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC), significantly expanding rental assistance so it is available to more households in need, preserving public housing by addressing the \$70 billion repair backlog, addressing the eviction crisis, and encouraging equal housing opportunities for all including by addressing racial disparities in homeownership.

### **Care for Creation**

Climate change is a serious challenge that requires investments in mitigation and adaptation to achieve rapid decarbonization, curb other greenhouse gas emissions such as methane, and protect the most vulnerable. Disadvantaged and marginalized communities who suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change should receive priority for investments in clean energy infrastructure and climate resilience. Special attention must be paid to jobs and the needs of coal and fossil fuel industry workers and their families, whose livelihoods face the uncertainties of energy transitions. Significant investment in technology research and development will be essential to provide secure, affordable, accessible, and equitable energy without harming the economy or creating more hardship for the poor. More investment is needed for improving building sustainability, enforcing clean electricity standards, renewable energy and efficiency, carbon capture, manufacturing R&D, public transit, and electric vehicles. Finally, the issue of access to clean water is crucial and additional funding is needed to replace lead pipes nationally, ensuring that all Americans have access to clean water, a universal human right.

### **Preserve Religious Liberty**

The benefits of this legislation should be available to all. To that end, Congress must avoid saddling programs and funding partnerships with obligations that exclude people and organizations who hold certain religious beliefs. For example, recipients of funding under the bill should not be required to assent to a false understanding of gender and sexuality.

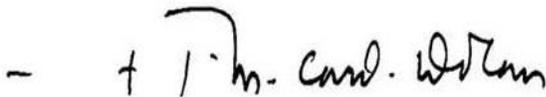
### **Respect the Rights and Dignity of Every Human Life in Health Care**

Our longstanding health care principles state that health care policies must respect life and dignity, honor conscience rights, and ensure that care is accessible to all, truly affordable, comprehensive, and high quality.<sup>v</sup> We urge you to work toward health care coverage solutions,

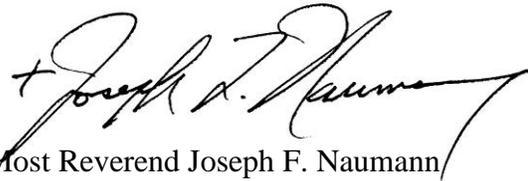
including Medicaid expansion proposals, that honor the principles stated above so that every person can have access to affordable and comprehensive care that promotes life and dignity. We also encourage you to enact permanent adequate Medicaid funding for U.S. territories that are facing a Medicaid cliff in September and to address the high rates of preventable maternal deaths in the United States, including by permanently extending Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months.

The USCCB insists that health care proposals in this bill, such as Medicaid expansion, be governed by the longstanding Hyde Amendment principle of not funding elective abortions. The destruction of human life through abortion is not a form of health care, and taxpayers should not be compelled to fund it. It would be a calamity if the important and life affirming provisions in this bill that we support were accompanied by provisions facilitating and funding the destruction of unborn human life. We urge you in the strongest possible terms not to set the lives and health of the born against the unborn, all of whom are our neighbors in need. Should this bill expand taxpayer funding of abortion, the USCCB will oppose it.

Sincerely,



His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan  
Archbishop of New York  
Chairman, Committee for Religious Liberty



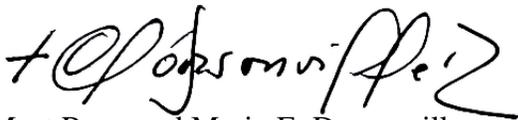
Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann  
Archbishop of Kansas City, KS  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities



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



Most Reverend C. Barber, S.J.  
Bishop of Oakland  
Chairman, Committee on Catholic  
Education



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

<sup>i</sup> See, [USCCB Principles Letter on Infrastructure](#) (April 22, 2021).

<sup>ii</sup> See, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 93.

<sup>iii</sup> See *Economic Justice for All*, no. 208.

<sup>iv</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26.

<sup>v</sup> See, e.g., [USCCB Letter to Congress on Moral Framework for Health Care During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (May 7, 2020).