



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

November 3, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative:

As the House prepares to vote on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Build Back Better Act, we renew our requests to Congress to work together toward legislation that promotes the common good and the dignity of every person.

In the course of your work preparing these bills, we have sent the following to you, outlining moral principles for consideration, and asking you to work towards 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:

- [Letter to Congress Concerning Legislation on Infrastructure, April 22, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congress on Federal Budget Reconciliation, September 7, 2021](#)
- [Letter to the Committee on Energy and Commerce on Abortion Funding, September 12, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congressional Leadership on Legalization of the Undocumented, September 23, 2021](#)

We commend the bipartisan efforts that led to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and we are grateful for the historic investments in jobs, public needs, and care for creation in that bill.<sup>1</sup>

### **Social Safety Net, Family Supports, Housing, and Care for Creation**

We are also encouraged by many of the provisions in the Build Back Better Act that support the poor and vulnerable and strengthen the social safety net. These include provisions to support workers, such as: an extension to the recent expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit; provisions to support families such as a permanent refundable Child Tax Credit, childcare resources, in-home care for family members, and a strengthening of child nutrition programs; an expansion of SSI to residents of U.S. territories; affordable housing provisions; and important environmental provisions, especially climate and energy programs critical to achieving emissions reductions targets.

Since paid leave may not be included in the Build Back Better Act, we encourage Congress to continue working to advance family leave proposals going forward. We also support continued efforts to resolve marriage penalties in the Earned Income Tax Credit and other programs. Within the current draft of the bill, we note with concern provisions that would advance an understanding of sex and gender that contradicts human nature.

### **Integration of Migrants and Refugees**

As stated in the USCCB Committee on Migration's September 23 letter to congressional leadership, we strongly urge you to continue working to advance legislation that would promote the full integration of undocumented persons already living as Americans in principle by affording them legalization with a pathway to citizenship. The Build Back Better Act presents an opportunity to accomplish this, and we strongly urge you to adopt provisions in this measure that

would achieve this goal. While we remain opposed to the existence of a “double society,”<sup>ii</sup> in the event that parliamentary constraints preclude permanent protections for the undocumented from being included in this bill, we would affirm the value of enacting temporary protections, with the expectation that Congress will work expeditiously to enact permanent relief in subsequent legislation.

### **Preserving Religious Liberty in Early Childhood Education**

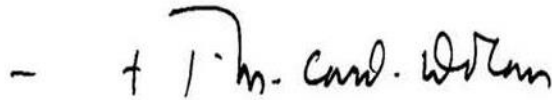
At the same time, we are concerned by several provisions in the Build Back Better Act that do not align with the principles we outlined with respect to preserving religious liberty and expanding access to early childhood education. Specifically, while expanded access to early child care and pre-k would be beneficial for many working families, we are concerned that the current provisions to do so - in a departure from the approach in existing federal programs - explicitly make providers recipients of federal financial assistance and attach new and troubling compliance obligations. This will effectively exclude many faith-based providers from participation (or in some already existing state-based programs, continued participation), thereby severely limiting options for families, and suppressing a mixed delivery system.

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

Finally, we have long supported efforts at federal and state levels to expand healthcare coverage, and we support many of the healthcare provisions in the Build Back Better Act, including the provision of health care coverage to those in the “Medicaid gap” through Affordable Care Act premium tax credits, the extension of Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months and other investments to address the high rates of preventable maternal deaths in the United States, support for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), pre-release Medicaid coverage for returning citizens, and Medicaid funding for U.S. territories to sustain their existing Medicaid programs and make further improvements. Furthermore, while we are pleased to see the addition of funding for training of health professionals in palliative medicine and hospice care, we strongly urge the addition of language to ensure that this funding cannot be used for training or promotion of assisted suicide or euthanasia.

However, it is completely unacceptable that the current House version of the Build Back Better Act expands taxpayer funding of abortion. We have been consistent in our position and reiterate that it would be a calamity if the important and life-affirming provisions in this bill were accompanied by provisions facilitating and funding the destruction of unborn human life. No proposal to support individuals needing affordable health care coverage should compel Americans to pay for the destruction of human life through their tax dollars. Specifically, while we recognize that a change was made to the latest version of the bill to attempt to exclude abortion from the health care services that are available to uncovered individuals in Medicaid non-expansion states in 2024 and 2025, this language is insufficient and must be clarified to ensure elective abortion coverage is not mandated or funded under the new arrangement. In addition, the latest text maintains the proposed health care affordability fund for states without Hyde protections, and provides funding for several public health grants without Hyde protections.<sup>iii</sup> This fundamental problem of expanded taxpayer funding of abortion in the Build Back Better Act must be remedied before the bill moves forward.

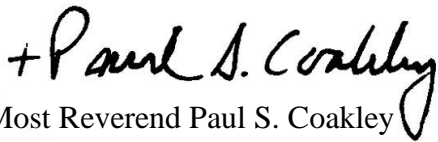
Sincerely,



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



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



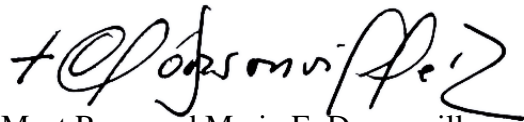
Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice  
and Human Development



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



Most Reverend David A. Konderla  
Bishop of Tulsa  
Chairman, Subcommittee for the Promotion  
and Defense of Marriage



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

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<sup>i</sup> See [U.S. Bishops' Chairman Grateful to Senate for Passing Infrastructure Bill, Signals Need for Additional Action](#) (August 7, 2021).

<sup>ii</sup> See [Written Testimony of the Most. Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville-Rodriguez, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington and Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration for a Hearing of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, "H.R.6, American Dream and Promise Act of 2021"](#), pp. 3-4 (June 15, 2021).

<sup>iii</sup> These provisions can be found in Section 30601, Section 30602, respectively. The funding for public health grants without Hyde protections can be found in both the Energy and Commerce and Education and Labor sections of the bill.