



February 3, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative:

We commend your bipartisan work in the past year that resulted in the enactment of five critically needed COVID relief packages. Your work together led to the provision of aid to countless brothers and sisters in every corner of our communities and assisted struggling families, businesses, charities, schools, hospitals, and more. These achievements should not soon be forgotten.

As our nation continues to suffer historic health and economic crises from the COVID pandemic, we ask you to continue your efforts to assess and respond to the needs that are present both here in our country and around the world. We especially encourage you to consider how additional COVID relief should promote the dignity and value of all human life and protect poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk. Accordingly, 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 unborn human life. We similarly express the importance of strengthening and upholding families to our national recovery and of avoiding policies that may erode their integrity or wellbeing.

We are hopeful that your response to these present challenges will truly build up the common good. We stand ready to assist you in these efforts, and we ask our Lord to guide you as you weigh decisions that will impact so many.

Hunger and Nutrition

An increasing number of households do not have enough to eat. Continued investments in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will help combat this food insecurity. Please maintain the recent increases in SNAP benefit amounts and the flexibilities provided to SNAP and other nutrition programs until the economy substantially recovers. We ask that you ensure adequate funding for vital nutrition programs such as the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and nutrition assistance to Puerto Rico and U.S. territories not served by SNAP.

Housing Assistance

Ensuring stable housing is essential, especially during a public health crisis. Emergency rental assistance that meets today's historic need is crucial in order to avoid evictions for tens of millions of people. We also ask you to help address housing insecurity by making robust investments in Emergency Solutions Grants, Housing Choice Vouchers, Community Development Block Grants – Disaster Relief (CDBG–DR), utility assistance, mortgage payment assistance, housing counseling services, and legal services for households facing evictions. Please refresh funding to federal housing programs that help low-income individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities, so they are able to meet the needs of their residents during this

pandemic and economic downturn.¹ To keep people safely housed until they are able to access these services, it is necessary to strengthen and extend eviction and foreclosure moratoriums and establish a national utility shutoff moratorium.

Catholic and Non-Public Education

Emergency aid for K-12 education should respond to learning loss resulting from COVID-related closures and the health and safety of all students in all schools, including the nearly two million students enrolled in Catholic schools. We request explicit equitable services for Catholic and other non-public schools in the next Education Stabilization Fund or similar K-12 education fund. Non-public schools have had access to equitable services since 1965 and have been included in all recent federal emergency aid bills. Equitable services should be made available to students and teachers in all non-public schools without unnecessary bureaucratic thresholds, such as prior participation in federal education programs.

We support additional K-12 funding and continued flexibility for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), which allows governors to best meet the education needs of the families, students, and teachers in their states. Additionally, as funds are provided to states to make vaccines available to students and teachers, non-public schools should be allowed to access these services within the same time frame as their public school counterparts.

Pathway to Citizenship and Work Authorization

We ask you to provide legal status and a pathway to citizenship for all essential workers, Dreamers, and TPS recipients and their families. Simultaneously, we ask you to ensure automatic continued work authorization. At a time of national uncertainty, individuals awaiting adjudication of immigration benefits, facing significant delays from USCIS, and/or anticipating the potential loss of work authorization are living under the looming threat of a loss of status and livelihood for themselves and their families. Nonimmigrants, essential workers, Dreamers, and TPS holders should have work status automatically extended to prevent confusion and adverse consequences for their immigration status in the future. Additionally, Congress should include a provision in the next legislative package to provide for a path to citizenship for all essential and frontline workers, Dreamers, and TPS holders.

Testing, Vaccinations, and Treatment for All

We ask you to ensure access to testing, vaccination, and treatment for COVID-19 for all, regardless of immigration or economic status while also ensuring that persons making use of such services not be considered public charges. Failure to address this accordingly will harm millions of people and put further strain on communities and providers.

Health Care

As we face this pandemic, many health care needs have grown. We urge you to find a way to provide affordable health care coverage to individuals who do not have access to employer sponsored insurance, do not qualify for Medicaid, and cannot afford private insurance for their families. We also urge you to ensure that no federal funding goes to health care plans that cover abortion. Any public option for health care, or similar efforts to increase access to health care, must include protections against using taxpayer dollars for elective abortions.

¹ To this end, programs we support include: Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) Program, Housing for People with Disabilities (Section 811), Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA), Project-Based Section 8 Rental Assistance, Community Development Block Grant Program.

We ask you to expand Medicaid resources for states and tribes so they can continue to respond to public health needs without making cuts to other vital services. In addition, we ask you to increase state resources for outreach and enrollment in the Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We support extending and, where appropriate, making telehealth flexibilities permanent to ensure increased access to health care services. We also encourage you to support and incentivize additional research on the link between air pollution and coronavirus health outcomes, to provide resources that expand access to behavioral health services, to provide dedicated resources for home and community-based services (HCBS) in the Medicaid program, to train more palliative care workers, and to provide sufficient resources for hospitals, health care providers, and nursing homes.

Racial inequities in health care, which existed in many forms before the COVID-19 crisis and have manifested in disturbingly disproportionate rates of coronavirus infection and death in patients of color, must be addressed. We support additional resources to Community Health Centers and other methods of care for low-income and historically marginalized communities, along with increased funding to Tribal governments to support their response to the pandemic. We encourage you to conduct targeted outreach, testing and treatment for vulnerable individuals and communities. We similarly encourage increased outreach and education on the effectiveness of vaccines and ensured access to a vaccine, especially for front-line workers, elderly and low-income individuals and racial and ethnic minority communities. Furthermore, we urge you to commit necessary federal resources to distribute a vaccine quickly and equitably.

Employment and Income Support

We ask you to respond to the millions of people who are unemployed or suffering lost wages as a result of the pandemic. We also request continued resources to keep people employed safely, and to assist the unemployed and those struggling to pay bills. Please ensure essential workers have access to sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, and emergency paid sick leave to safeguard their health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we ask you to ensure that employers have access to resources to retain and rehire their workers, and that all pandemic insurance programs are extended and expanded for the duration of the economic downturn. We also support additional stimulus payments while employment opportunities are reduced and an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit to counter deepening economic insecurity. We ask you to provide support to families in need of childcare and to childcare providers so families can get back to work and this critical sector can keep operating. Please include Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories as you consider income supports and other necessary aid. We also urge that persons served by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)—including but not limited to newly arrived refugees and asylees, persons receiving protection from Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and those who otherwise are considered to be permanently residing in the United States under the color of law (PRUCOL)—are included in these income support programs and other necessary aid.

Access to Stimulus Payments

Please make all U.S.-citizen children and all Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) filers eligible for stimulus payments. Economic impact payments to families provide much needed assistance during a time when many are facing unemployment and reduced hours, as well as increased costs for childcare and other expenses. Nationally, almost 3.7 million U.S.-citizen

and legal-immigrant children from mixed-status families were excluded from CARES Act funding, which required both parents to have a Social Security Number (SSN). The most recent package allowed one parent with an SSN to qualify for a stimulus payment; unfortunately, a total of 2.2 million U.S.-citizen and legal-immigrant children remain excluded. All persons who file taxes using ITIN and all U.S.-citizen children should be eligible for cash payments to help ensure access to basic necessities during this crisis. Such vital relief for U.S.-citizen children, in particular, should not hinge on their parents' immigration status. Asylees and refugees should also be eligible for payments, as these individuals play a role in recovery.

International Response

In just the last few weeks we have seen at least three new strains of the coronavirus rise up from three different continents. It is clear that we cannot stop this pandemic anywhere unless we stop it everywhere. Therefore, we urge you to provide at least \$20 billion for the international response to COVID-19 in the next supplemental package.

We encourage Congress to appropriate flexible funding that supports both bilateral and multilateral efforts to meet immediate health needs and mitigate humanitarian, economic, and social impacts. Assistance should support local leadership, including faith-based organizations, to ensure an appropriate, effective, and sustainable response. This should include not only the local residents of these countries, but also those who are internally displaced and those seeking refuge in countries of asylum. In many low-income countries of the world, the Catholic Church is one of the most trusted institutions present. The Church operates numerous health structures, from hospitals in the major cities to community health clinics in the farthest reaches of the country, often in places where the national government does not reach. Lastly, international assistance should support fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and transparency on how vaccines will be prioritized.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its local partners continue to design, adapt, and implement emergency and development programming worldwide that incorporates COVID-19 preventive measures. CRS programs ensure people meet their food and other basic needs; households and small businesses can withstand livelihood disruptions and restart income-generating activities; and communities strengthen social cohesion and well-being.

State and Local Governments

Please provide state and local governments with increased funding to help them continue to provide a safety net as they manage increased need and decreased revenue.

Safety in Prisons, Jails, and Detention Centers

COVID-19 poses a serious threat to those in prisons, jails, and detention centers, which were not designed for social distancing. In light of the pandemic, we request greater consideration of appropriate compassionate release for vulnerable people who are incarcerated or detained, and certain fees related to the criminal justice system to be waived, such as fees for phone and video calls. We urge you to provide facilities with sufficient health care resources to offer good care to those who become ill and to provide states with resources and incentives to implement these policies.

Please place appropriate public health restrictions on immigration detention and ensure those detained receive proper care and protection. Lives have been put at risk and public safety

threatened by continuing immigration enforcement and detention during the pandemic, especially the rapid expulsion of children and families under Title 42, circumventing longstanding, bipartisan protections for asylum seekers and unaccompanied children. Additionally, individuals who are elderly, pregnant, and at-risk continue to be detained. The next COVID package should require DHS to use all available discretionary powers to review the cases of all currently detained. It should also prioritize for release on recognizance or alternatives to detention for all individuals who are not subject to mandatory detention laws.

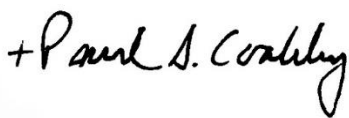
Racial Justice

We ask you to consider the needs of the historically marginalized, especially with regard to how any new policies may address the systemic racism and oppression that manifest in disparate health and economic outcomes.

Charitable Sector

We ask that you incentivize charitable giving by further expanding the above-the-line charitable giving tax deduction beyond what was provided in previous legislation. We also ask you to increase the federal unemployment reimbursement for reimbursing nonprofits to 100% of costs. Lastly, religious organizations should have equal access to available assistance, which should not be saddled with compliance obligations that effectively exclude certain faith groups.

Sincerely,



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



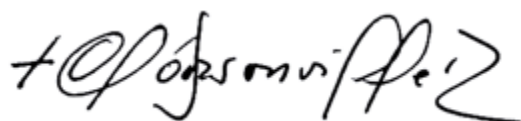
Most Reverend David J. Malloy
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Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ
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Chairman, Committee on Catholic
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Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
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Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville
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Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities