



# CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

President-elect Donald J. Trump  
Trump Tower  
721 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

January 18, 2017

Dear President-elect Trump,

We are praying that God will bless and guide you as you assume the responsibilities of the presidency. The Circle of Protection is made up of leaders from Christian communions, organizations, and schools committed to protecting our poor and vulnerable neighbors in the public policy arena and promoting policies that further their dignity and well-being. We come from all the main families of U.S. Christianity – Catholic, evangelical Protestant, ecumenical Protestant, African-American, and Latino. We do not agree on everything, but we all agree that our country's policies should reflect God's special concern for poor and vulnerable people – those Jesus called "the least of these."

Thank you for your letter to us on September 28th. You noted that "[p]overty is still an issue that affects far too many Americans" and that "[t]he hands, hearts, prayers and wallets of the faithful are indispensable" to the effort to address poverty. Each year our churches and organizations see firsthand the devastating impacts of poverty and exclusion in our country. As people of faith we are called not only to serve the millions of Americans each year who are in need but also to promote laws and policies which promote human dignity and reflect God's special concern for poor and vulnerable people.

After the economic and financial crisis of 2008, our country's social safety net helped keep millions of Americans out of poverty and meet their basic needs. Since the apex of the crisis, our country has seen poverty decline and millions of Americans getting back on their feet. In light of this progress and our country's commitments to end extreme poverty and hunger at home and abroad by 2030, now is the time to redouble our efforts at promoting and defending programs which encourage economic empowerment, reversing racial inequality and xenophobia which are causes of poverty, and building bridges within our divided country. As people of faith, we believe that all people are created in God's image, and have long been at the forefront of efforts to combat the sin of racism and end the xenophobic spirit which seeks to vilify immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, many of whom fear deportation. Combating poverty and expanding opportunity requires bridges of understanding between communities rather than division and we believe an inclusive welcoming spirit is the best for America's future.

Because we connect to so many of the Christian faithful in the United States, we believe that an opportunity to share with you the concerns of our communities will bear much fruit. **We respectfully request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience. We also ask that you would designate a contact in your administration with whom we may dialogue in advance of and after our visit with you.** The Circle of Protection leadership can be reached through David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, at 202-688-1105 or Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, at 202-468-0384.

We have long called for our leaders to help our nation live up to our highest ideals of care, concern and respect for those on the margins. The rifts in our country require healing, a renewed trust in government, and inspiration for what we can achieve together. We believe that

these goals are achievable in the years ahead, with prayerful discernment and collaborative approaches to difficult problems. Your policies over the next four years are crucial to the progress that is possible. So as you shape your priorities for your first year in office, we ask you to work with Congress to:

1. Adopt a budget framework that replaces sequestration, protects low-income entitlement programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, and maintains a circle of protection around funding for programs focused on people in poverty. We will work with you to improve public programs, but our society must prioritize help and opportunity for hungry and poor people.
2. Promote economic policies that create jobs and that especially benefit low-income people. New infrastructure spending should prominently include development in struggling communities.
3. Protect and promote access to health care by ensuring that any repeal of the Affordable Care Act is done simultaneously with a plan that ensures that the millions of Americans who have insurance, or gained access to health care under the Affordable Care Act, are protected and that the millions still without access to affordable health care gain access to health care coverage.
4. Adopt tax reform policies that aim to lift those who now struggle into the middle class, and encourage charitable giving that helps those struggling in poverty. Expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income workers who are not raising children will be a useful improvement.
5. Pass criminal justice reform that reduces mandatory minimum sentences, improves policing and correctional policies, and helps returning citizens reconnect with their families and contribute to their communities.

We will continue to pray for you throughout your presidency. We hope to work with you to advance the common good and to protect poor and vulnerable people.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:35-40)*

Sincerely,



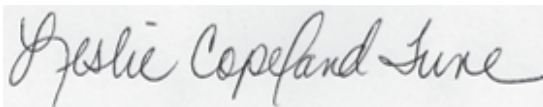
Leith Anderson, President  
National Association of Evangelicals



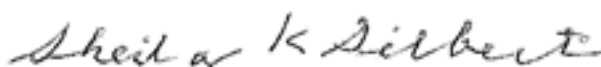
David Beckmann, President  
Bread for the World



Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General Secretary  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference



Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune, Director  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative



Sheila K. Gilbert, President  
National Council of the United States Society  
of St. Vincent de Paul



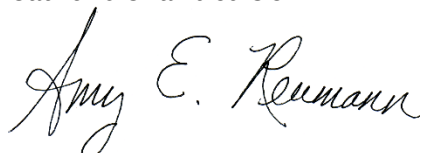
Rev. Carlos L. Malavè, Executive Director  
Christian Churches Together in the USA



Sister Donna Markham, OP, PhD, President  
and CEO  
Catholic Charities USA



Diane Randall, Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation



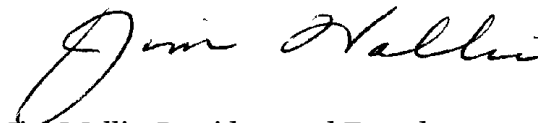
Rev. Amy E. Reumann, Director of Advocacy  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Jonathan Reyes, Executive Director for the  
Office of Justice, Peace and Human  
Development  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President  
National Latino Evangelical Coalition



Jim Wallis, President and Founder  
Sojourners



Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Chair  
National African American Clergy Network



Jim Winkler, President and General  
Secretary  
National Council of Churches