

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S 128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H 307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S 146A, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers,  
Ranking Member Shelby, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As leaders of the Circle of Protection, an unprecedented group of Christian religious leaders from across denominations, we urge you to prioritize programs that address poverty and hunger in the U.S. and around the world in the appropriations process. In Proverbs (31.9) we are reminded of our responsibility to *“Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.”* The federal budget should reflect a government that provides hope, opportunity, and a place at the table for all, especially for those struggling at the margins of society.

While we would have preferred a budget deal that allowed for greater relief from sequestration, we welcome the partial relief included in the Bipartisan Budget Act. Sequestration already has caused serious damage to anti-poverty initiatives across the country and around the world, and it posed even greater threats in 2014.

However, even before sequestration, many critical programs that aid struggling families were already underfunded, having suffered years of underinvestment. Thus, we believe these programs should be a top priority in your appropriations decisions for the remainder of FY 2014. While there are many programs that provide vital support to people living in poverty, in particular, we urge you to robustly fund:

- **International Poverty-Focused Development Assistance** within *State Foreign Operations* appropriations. These programs save lives and help improve conditions for millions of people more by giving people the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty.
- **The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** within *Agriculture* appropriations.
- **International Food Aid**, specifically McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program and P.L. 480 Food for Peace within *Agriculture* appropriations.
- **Meals on Wheels** within *Labor-HHS* appropriations.
- **Head Start** within *Labor-HHS* appropriations.
- **Refugee Assistance** within *Labor-HHS* appropriations.
- **Low-Income Housing Assistance and Homelessness Prevention** within *Transportation-HUD* appropriations.

- **Low-Income Education and Workforce Training** within *Labor-HHS* appropriations.

The Bipartisan Budget Act funding levels allow Congress to prioritize specific allocations, deciding how to spend the limited federal dollars available. We urge you to remember “the least of these” in those funding decisions.

Sincerely,

David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World

Galen Carey, Vice President, Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals

Jim Wallis, President, Sojourners

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, Chairman, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Members of the House Committee on Appropriations