



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

July 19, 2021

Dear President Biden and members of Congress:

We write to you as the Circle of Protection, a coalition of church bodies and related ministries representing the diversity of Christianity in this country - Historic Black Churches, Hispanic Churches, Protestants and Evangelicals, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Churches, Pentecostals, and Peace Churches. Together, the church bodies in the Circle of Protection have close to 100 million members. We are united across theological, sociological, and political differences by our shared Christian faith and the motivation it inspires to make our nation and world more consistent with the fact that God loves all people, with a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, as our Scriptures remind us.

We welcome the announcement of a **bipartisan infrastructure framework**. Bipartisan collaboration and overdue investments in infrastructure are both good for the nation, and we are especially excited about the components of this package that would disproportionately benefit low-income people – such as universal broadband access, the replacement of the lead pipes that are poisoning many of our children, and improvements in public transportation. These are investments in the health and productivity of struggling communities. Many of our church members live and work in these communities. We are also struck by the fact that 90 percent of the jobs financed by the bipartisan infrastructure framework would not require a college degree. As faith leaders, we wholeheartedly support the focus on rebuilding infrastructure in a way that advances economic and racial equity for low-income people and families.

We also want to reiterate continued and deep support for a **broad, ambitious recovery package** that focuses on our human infrastructure (including housing, education, nutrition, health care, family care, and international aid) and addresses the systemic issues laid bare by the pandemic. We won't all agree on every provision in the legislation that is being crafted, but we all see the need for major investments in the lives of low-income families. We are thrilled by how this year's expansion of the Child Tax Credit will substantially reduce child poverty and want to see its expansion continued in future years. We continue to support strengthening nutrition programs and investments in affordable housing, rental assistance, and funding for tribal housing. We also, as a broad coalition of faith leaders, support financing these investments in our nation's future with increased taxes on corporations and high-income individuals. We believe that asking the wealthiest in our society to support those families and children on the low end is both fair economically and right morally. This is a controversial point, but the God of the Bible urges nations to care for people in need and objects to extreme concentrations of wealth. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jesus himself spoke out against the contrast between luxury for some and the neglect of people in poverty.

We also feel compelled to speak up together for **voting rights legislation**. One of the most fundamental and cherished rights in our American democracy is the right to vote. Faith communities are united in defense of democracy. Making voting accessible to all eligible voters is far more than a political issue. It

has profound theological implications because this civil right affirms the inherent dignity and value of each person made in the image of God – *imago dei*. Election laws should make voting easier, not harder, while protecting the transparency and integrity of the voting, counting and certification processes. Attempts to restrict voting rights often disproportionately impact communities of color. We hope and pray that legislators from both parties can again work together on this issue of basic justice and theological conviction.

The Hebrew prophets taught that nations are sometimes called to make big changes, and we have come to prayerful agreement that now is such a time for our nation. We are still recovering from the pandemic, and we can do so in a way that also expands opportunity for all our people and helps protect our environment at the same time. We see this opportunity as a call from God. We pledge to pray for our leaders as they carry out their God-given responsibilities.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. David Beckmann, President Emeritus, Bread for the World

John Carr, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

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

Rev. Eugene Cho, President, Bread for the World

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

The Most Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Rev. Carlos L. Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together

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

Ralph Middlecamp, President, National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Diane Randall, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Bishop Adam J. Richardson, Senior Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President and Founder, National Latino Evangelical Association

Rev. Adam Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Jim Wallis, Founder and Ambassador, Sojourners

Rev. Cecilia Williams, President and CEO, Christian Community Development Association

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener of the National African American Clergy Network

Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches