



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

September 22, 2021

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,

We write to you as leaders of the Circle of Protection, a coalition of church bodies and national faith-based organizations representing the diversity of Christianity in this country. Together, the church bodies represented in the Circle of Protection have close to 100 million members.

Debates over bills being developed in Congress often do not get the attention of our many constituencies and congregations--and frankly, even us as church leaders. Partisan gridlock and harsh rhetoric do not encourage trust and keep people positively engaged.

But three big bills coming before the House and Senate have captured our attention - the bipartisan infrastructure bill, the family support budget bill, and voting rights legislation. If passed and signed into law they would strengthen the physical and social infrastructure of our society, cut family and child poverty more than any time in our lives, and ensure the precious right to vote for all people made in God's image.

We want to offer specific suggestions for the family support budget bill as it is finalized. We fervently endorse the extension of recent improvements in the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Making the full value of the Child Tax Credit available to the poorest households has substantially reduced child poverty, and we are all of one mind that this provision should be made permanent. The improvements in the EITC are benefiting those low-income working adults who often see little or no other assistance. In view of America's affordable housing crisis, we also support a generous expansion of housing vouchers, because a place to live for families draws us all together.

Business groups and corporations are fighting hard against tax increases for corporations and high-income individuals, have spent nearly \$1.5 billion on lobbying in the first half of this year, and are now intensifying their efforts. Yet we believe that our nation is called to reduce poverty, expand opportunity, and address racial disparities - and that everyone, especially wealthy individuals and corporations, should pay their fair share. The Bible is clear in its opposition to the concentration of wealth amid neglected human need. Those who have benefited the most should contribute to the common good of society and invest in the most vulnerable.

We urge finalization of all three of the momentous bills that are now pending in Congress. We don't all agree on every aspect of these multifaceted pieces of legislation or on the legislative processes, but many of their provisions will protect human dignity, support families, and serve the common good of society. We are all pro-family, and that entails support for economic policies that help families escape poverty and flourish. And when it comes to voting rights, democracy and the moral character of the nation are at stake.

At this moment of historic decision, we are urging the people in our churches and organizations to pay attention to what the President and Congress are doing and be active in advocacy that reflects biblical priorities. As always, we pray for you and all our elected leaders. We are ready and willing to meet, talk and pray together.

Blessings,

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

Rev. David Beckmann, Coordinator, Circle of Protection

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

Rev. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Rev. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Rev. Carlos L. Malavé, Coordinator, Latino Christian National Network

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

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

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, National African American Clergy Network

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