



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

November 2, 2021

Christian Leaders Respond to President Biden's Build Back Better Framework

Rev. David Beckmann, Coordinator, Circle of Protection

“I pray for passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill and the President’s framework for the family support budget bill. The infrastructure bill includes important provisions for people in poverty, and the two bills together would do more to reduce poverty than any legislation in my lifetime. Now is what the Bible calls a *kairos* moment. If a few Members of Congress delay action, they risk forfeiting the opportunity of a lifetime to make the U.S. economy more just and sustainable.”

Rebecca Linder-Blachly, Director, The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations:

“The Build Back Better Framework announced by President Biden today represents a historic investment in the human needs of low-income and vulnerable Americans. The legislation will extend important new support to families and children, in addition to providing affordable health care to millions of previously uncovered people, essential care for older and disabled Americans, and vital investments in confronting the climate crisis. The Episcopal Church strongly supports this framework and urges Congress to do the same.”

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

“We welcome the proposed extension of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) for an additional year. The CTC has enjoyed strong support from both Republicans and Democrats. Congress should make this pro-family provision a permanent part of our tax code. Prospective parents need the assurance of long-term support, not intermittent assistance that depends on how the political winds are blowing in Washington each year.

Additional support for childcare and pre-K education is also welcome, if it continues to be provided through certificates that parents can use for the care that best meets their family’s needs—whether faith-based or secular.

Proposals to redefine this support to parents as federal financial assistance to the providers chosen by the parents would reduce the available providers at a time when we need all hands on deck. Faith-based providers should not be forced to choose between scrubbing faith from their curriculum or turning away families that depend on federal assistance.”

Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO, Bread for the World

“The reconciliation framework released by the White House includes many important provisions that will ensure the nation’s most vulnerable children receive the care and nutrition they need. It extends the expanded Child Tax Credit for another year and makes the full refundability of the credit permanent, strengthens child nutrition programs, and expands access to high-quality child care.

While the framework omits proposals supported by Bread for the World and scales back others, we urge members of Congress to support its passage. We also urge Congress to come back next year to ensure programs such as the expanded Child Tax Credit continue and to increase funding for child nutrition.

God loves all of humanity and has special concern for the most vulnerable people among us, including children. Passing the reconciliation framework will help countless children and their families escape hunger and poverty and enable them to lead healthy and productive lives.”

John B. Johnson, Program Director for Domestic Policy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statements state clearly: “God works through the family, education, the economy, the state, and other structures necessary for life in the present age. God institutes governing authorities, for example, to serve the good of society. [The ELCA] respects the God-given integrity and tasks of governing authorities and other worldly structures, while holding them accountable to God.”

Every one of us knows someone who has been impacted—sometimes tragically—by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, our political leaders step ever closer to significant and transformational progress in creating a more racially equitable, fairer, and robust response to the needs of vulnerable communities that existed before the pandemic and are now starkly made plain as a result of COVID-19. The framework of the Build Back Better proposal with the bi-partisan Infrastructure legislation is an investment in the dignity and opportunity that rests with every policy maker and citizen alike

The gains in these legislative priorities may be smaller than we all may want. Many programs have expiration dates that will need to be addressed. Make no mistake, however, good and needed help to hurting families and workers will be realized. Families, children, and vulnerable people face a more equitable playing field now than before the pandemic.

All of us must continue to urge our elected officials to move these legislative proposals into law, and we must thank them for their service to our country.”

Rev. Carlos L. Malave, Director, Latino Christian National Network

“The reconciliation framework released by the White House today sends a strong message to Americans that their lives matter. Millions struggling to afford a place to live will have the opportunity to secure a dwelling and their dignity. The family, especially children, are a priority under the legislative framework. The extension of the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax for one year is a welcomed and good starting point. We are close to implementing the most significant investment for the American people in generations. This has happened because of the effort and commitment of civil, religious, and political leaders of goodwill. We support this framework for the legislation and trust that Congress will pass it without delay.”

Diane E. Randall, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

“The Build Back Better Framework is a momentous step toward a society with equity and justice and an earth restored. It continues the historic expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, enabling parents with little or no income to permanently receive income support which means fewer children living in poverty. The investments in housing assistance, health care, childcare, and pre-k will strengthen our society’s support of families and children. Additionally, the framework provides critical protections to immigrant communities that have suffered from congressional inaction for decades. The investment of hundreds of billions of dollars to address climate change through significant funding for clean energy incentives and clean technology is an essential step to reduce this country’s reliance on fossil fuels.

“While this package goes farther than any other in recent history to invest in people and their well-being, there is still much left to do. We have a moral imperative to create a clear pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. We know that creating paid family leave and a permanent extension of the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits is an investment in families. And we know continued action and investment to reduce carbon to stop climate change will determine our future.

“I urge the House and Senate to pass the Build Back Better Act immediately on these long-sought reforms with the intention of always asking how government can best serve *all* people.”

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, Pastor, The Gathering Place and President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

"The framework for a bipartisan infrastructure bill shows much promise toward helping some of the most vulnerable families and children by providing full refundability for the Child Tax Credit, expanding EITC, helping millions of uninsured people, and providing universal pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds. Indeed, this is a legislation with the potential to alleviate poverty for so many of our fellow citizens."

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

The White House's Build Back Better Framework is transformational for communities of color. Provisions like the Child Tax Credit, affordable housing, support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Medicaid Coverage Gap, and Universal Pre-K, help to provide a more secure future for poor and low income urban and rural children. While the Framework omits Paid Family Leave and Free Community College, there is so much in the reconciliation package that would bring new hope to millions of vulnerable Americans. Congress is truly at a *kairos* moment for our nation with the possibility of passing the Build Back Better Act. We trust that Senator Joe Manchin and Congresswoman Sinema do not want to be regarded as the "fiscal Bull Connors" of our time, standing in the doorway of racial and economic equity for millions of Americans of color in greatest need."

Reverend Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners:

“As President and on behalf of Sojourners, we are pleased to see historic investments being laid out in the recently released family support budget framework. Members of Congress have a moral obligation as stewards of governance to help create a society that follows one of the most important commandments—love thy neighbor as thyself. From housing to health care to child care to caring for our Earth, we believe this framework has the potential to bring good news to

the people and communities across rural, urban, and suburban America. It is our hope that Members look into their hearts and continue to push for inclusion of life-changing and lifesaving programs and policies such as full refundability and permanent expansion of the Child Tax Credit, twelve weeks of Paid Family and Medical Leave (PMFL), and expansion of Medicare and Medicaid in a way that positively impacts the millions who rely on those services for care. If included in the final framework, Members have the opportunity to seal their legacy in history as true champions of the American people who governed with goodwill and hope.”

Jim Wallis, Founding Director of Georgetown University’s Center on Faith and Justice:

“Congress has arrived at a *kairos* moment, when transformational change is within reach. These are measures that I have been fighting for for 50 years,” said Wallis, an anti-poverty advocate, Christian ethicist and public theologian. “I hope and pray that critical elements of this framework, especially those that support poor people, make it into the final bill. We will be watching Senate obstructionists closely. ”

The Build Back Better Framework released by the White House on Thursday includes a one-year extension of the Child Tax Credit, a measure Wallis advocated for on Capitol Hill and in the White House. According to researchers, the CTC has the potential to reduce child poverty in the U.S. by half.

The framework also invests billions in affordable housing, provides universal pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds and offers tax credits to people in states that cannot access Medicaid -- all policies that could lift millions out of poverty, Wallis said. The measures are paid for by increasing taxes on wealthy people and corporations.

“We have a moral obligation to ensure that every child — all made in the image of God -- has the chance to thrive,” Wallis said. “That is what it means to be ‘pro-family.’”

Wallis had strong words for senators who insisted that items like paid family leave be removed from the reconciliation bill’s framework.

“Senators Manchin and Sinema must stop placing their political self-interest ahead of the needs of the American public, including their constituents and low-income families countrywide,” Wallis said. “They should value courage, moral imagination and leadership more than their careers. ”

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

“As Jesus told us, the kingdom of God belongs to the little children. As Christians, we are called to care for each one. The Build Back Better (BBB) Framework creates a brighter future for our children by providing universal pre-k for 3 and 4-year-olds and ensuring that childcare is affordable for many families. The National Council of Churches’ 2021 priorities include expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) so we applaud the one-year extension of these programs in BBB but will continue to advocate for a permanent expansion. The NCC has called for the administration to address health and educational disparities. Therefore, we fully support the Affordable Care Act premium tax credits for up to 4 million uninsured people in states where they can’t access Medicaid, but at the same time are

troubled by the exclusion of paid family leave and tuition-free community college which, if included, would go a long way in bringing economic equity to the US.”