



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

December 14, 2021

Dear Senator,

The Circle of Protection is a coalition of national church bodies and faith-based organizations representing the diversity of Christianity in this country. Our collective influence is far-reaching. A number of the leaders in the Circle oversee thousands of congregations, and the organizations in the Circle together have close to 100 million members.

We urge that the Senate not weaken the Build Back Better Act's many provisions that will significantly cut poverty, expand opportunity, and reduce racial disparities - and that you complete your work on this legislation before Christmas.

We are especially concerned that the following features of the Build Back Better Act be protected in your negotiations and the amendment process:

- **Making the Child Tax Credit available to the poorest families permanently by making it fully refundable, with no work requirements, and including the children of undocumented immigrant families.** Jesus was clear about the importance of caring for children, and the Bible is also clear about the importance of treating immigrants humanely. The Child Tax Credit has reduced child hunger this year, and this great achievement should not be reversed. If Congress doesn't extend the Child Tax Credit improvements this month, the monthly payments of the Child Tax Credit will stop, provoking hardship for many families with children.
- **Extending federal health insurance to the two million people who cannot afford health insurance in the states that have not expanded Medicaid.** While there is not full agreement among us on how to fix the coverage gap, we all agree on the importance of health care coverage for all low-income people. Many of our church based institutions are deeply involved with health care.
- **Making housing affordable for the lowest income households, including robust support for rental assistance vouchers.** Preventing homelessness is also a faith imperative.
- **Expanding childcare and Pre-K education, assuring that providers that offer faith-based programs and curriculum are not excluded. We also favor the paid leave program that is in the House bill.** These features of the Build Back Better Act will improve the care and education of children and allow more parents to hold jobs.

- **Paying for needed public investments by increasing taxes on high-income people and corporations and eliminating loopholes, such as the expanded SALT deduction, that mainly benefit upper income taxpayers.** This is important for fiscal reasons, and the Bible teaches against concentrations of wealth amid unmet human need.

At Christmas, we celebrate God's coming into our world - uniquely in the baby Jesus, but also in the love of families gathering for the holidays, and certainly in the reduction of hunger among American children this year. During the Advent season that leads up to Christmas we also focus on the promise of a time when there will be "hunger no more" (Revelation 7:16). The Senate's approval of the poverty-reducing provisions in the Build Back Better Act would be a great Christmas gift to America.

Signed,

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

Rev. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

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

Dr. Monica Schaap Pierce, Interim Executive Director, Christian Churches Together

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. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada

Rev. Adam Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Jim Wallis, Chair in Faith and Justice, McCourt School of Public Policy, and Director, Center on Faith and Justice, Georgetown University

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

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